KSGU Volume 8

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Kadokawa Comics A

機動戦士ガンダムUC

8 宇宙と惑星と

福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和
メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ
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Kadokawa Comics A

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン 8

福井晴敏

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所属を超え、怨讐を乗り越え、ついに強襲揚陸艦《ネェル・アーガマ》へと集った運命の人々。
それは《ユニコーン》が示した希望が導いた奇跡であった。
事態の決着へ向けて、バナージたちは最後の探索を開始する。しかしその最中、
共有したと信じた希望は、もっとも残酷な形で裏切られることとなる。突き付けられる現実。
そして囁かれる可能性を否定する言葉。可能性(ニュータイプ)では人の心を変革することはできないのか――!?
ガンダムサーガ最新作。人の宿業と対峙する第8巻!

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

8 宇宙と惑星と

福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季　挿絵 虎哉孝征

Previous to GUNDAM UC

前巻までのあらすじ

宇宙世紀0096年。連邦政府転覆の可能性を秘めるとされる『ラプラスの箱』をめぐり、ビスト財団、ネオ・ジオン軍残党、連邦政府は水面下で駆け引きを続けていた。工業コロニーに住む少年バナージ・リンクスは、謎の少女オードリー（ミネバ・ラオ・ザビ）を助けたことからこの争乱に巻き込まれ、実の父にしてビスト財団当主であったカーディアスから純白のMS《ユニコーンガンダム》を託されることとなる。戦闘を逃れ、ミネバと共に連邦軍の強襲揚陸艦《ネェル・アーガマ》に収容されるバナージ。しかし彼は事態の鍵を握る《ユニコーン》のパイロットとなったことで、否応なくこの争乱に巻き込まれてゆくのであった。

『ラプラスの箱』に至る座標を段階的に開示する《ユニコーン》に導かれ、ラプラス史跡、首都ダカール、トリントン基地と、時にはネオ・ジオン側に身を置きながら各地を転戦するバナージ。そんな彼をからめ取るべく、カーディアスに代わってビスト財団を掌握したマーサ・カーバインはミネバを捕え、その策謀の手を伸ばす。さらにニュータイプとしてバナージと心を通わせた強化人間マリーダ・クルスまでマーサの手に落ちてしまった。これを追うバナージはマリーダの上官であり、ネオ・ジオンの偽装貨物船《ガランシェール》の船長でもあるジンネマンの協力を得て、なんとか二人を取り戻すことに成功する。そしてバナージと救出した人々を収容した《ガランシェール》は地球の重力を振り切り、ブライト司令の命を受け地球軌道上で待機していた《ネェル・アーガマ》との合流を果たすのであった。

イラスト／安彦良和、虎哉孝征

Chapter 1

Part 1

"Nigel Garrett, Uniform 007, launching!"

The countdown timer showed 0, and the catapult was fired. Nigel Garrett grabbed the control sticks as he took on the G force that amounted to a maximum of 5G.

The catapult deck that slid by below was a lot shorter than the one on the "Ra Cailum", and the launch velocity was slower as a result. Once it left the deck, Nigel stepped on the pedal. The "Jesta" got into the darkness of space as it used its thrusters, and pulled itself away from the Base Jabber in front of it. Right when the 20m tall machine was about to use its manipulator to hold onto the platform, the machine behind was at the start of the catapult deck.

Daryl McGuninness "Jesta" too followed the same process as it launched from the catapult of the "Carrot". This ship of the Clop-class was only approximately half as heavy as the "Ra Cailum", as there was only one deck that was aligned to the bow. Daryl's machine had to follow the same path as Nigel's as it merely activated the AMBAC on its limbs to adjust itself and connected itself under Nigel's machine. Unlike the machines with specifications for Earth use, the Base Jabber for space use had platforms on the top and below, and the flat machine, commonly called the "Clog", could allow for two machines to ride on it. The tremors came when Daryl's machine connected on, and Nigel stepped on the pedal again. The "Jestas" crouching on the

platforms lit their thrusters again, and the SFS ferrying them started to accelerate. It took the thrust from Daryl's machine and pulled its distance from the "Carrot" and entered the darkness of the vacuum.

He activated the laser communication with the mothership as he looked around the all-view monitor. The Earth was behind him, the size of a basketball, and there were 3 celestial objects that could be seen above in front of him, Capella, Aldearan, Rigel. The stars that were CG corrected for astronomical observations were giving off unnaturally large glows. He could see the “Tenenbaum” that was of the same class as the “Clog” below him, and numerous thruster flares could be seen dragging from the side, forming silver trajectories in space. Those were the lights released by the mobile suits of the Tenenbaum fleet. There were two SFS, one “Stark Jegan ” and two normal “Jegans”. Nigel saw that they were also headed to L3, turned to the space region in front of him where the “Luna II ” could be seen; then, he spotted the Base Jabber catch up from behind, and the 3rd machine riding on it appeared in his sights.

The beam cannons and Gatling cannons equipped on its backpack were protruding out, and the enhanced armor had missiles and grenades all over its limbs. This heavy-armed “Jesta Cannon” included a hand-wieldable beam rifle and a grenade launcher set with physical ammunition. The bulk of the machine really complemented the stumpy Watts Stepney. “Looks heavy there, Watts.” Nigel looked at the hulking machine that was standing watch on the “Clog” as he muttered this, (It’s nothing much.) However, the gruff voice came, and Watts let his personalized Base Jabber spin once.

(We've been trained under Earth's gravity. We'll repay them the debt we owe from Torrington Base.)

(We'll leave it to you, Tri-Stars brothers. That disguised merchants ship caused our Carrot fleet some suffering too.)

The lieutenant in charge of piloting the Base Jabber injected through the contact loop. (Roger that. We won't forget the grace of this pit-stop.) Upon hearing Daryl's voice, Nigel turned forward again with a stare intending to hunt the enemies. The Moon was across the other side of the Earth, and the space in front of him looked like a bottomless abyss. The radars could not work under the effects of the Minovsky Particles, and they could not detect the target's thruster flares; however, they could be certain that the " Garencieres" was nearby. The fake Neo Zeon merchant ship took down the mobile suits of the "Carrot" and wrecked the "Ra Cailum" to a point of paralysis. With the "Unicorn" it stole, this " Sleeves" ship was definitely somewhere in this pitch darkness, hoping to meet up with the main fleet.

It had been 3 days since the Zeon remnants attack on Torrington Base. The "Ra Cailum" could not leave the ground as its engines were wrecked, and the reason why the Tri-Stars were the only ones who went up to space was because Nigel and company insisted on not letting go of them, and the "Carrot" needed to make up for the loss in fighting strength it had, resulting in an outcome where both objectives were met. They immediately launched from a nearby launch base, and met up with the 3rd team, 16th Task Force of Londo Bell that was moving by in low orbit. However, it seemed that the "Garencieres" had already left Earth's Absolute Defense zone, and since they were unable to keep

track of their target, the "Carrot" and the "Tenenbaum" were surrounded by an urge to give up. But one hour ago, the atmosphere changed when they detected a source of Minovsky Particles moving quickly.

They still did not know where the "Garencieres" headed towards L3 was headed towards as it scattered its Minovsky Particles. Lagrange Point 3 between Earth and the Moon had only the Side 7 colony cluster that was under construction and the " Luna II", the stronghold of the Federation space fleet; it would be hard to imagine that there would be "Sleeve" bases nearby there. Side 6, where the Neo Zeon fleet was rumored to be hiding in, was at L5, a completely different place, and it was improbable for a rendezvous to be held here.

Where is it going—no, more importantly, where has it been during the 3 days after the commotion in Torrington Base, and what had it been doing? Nigel felt the excitement in him as he stared at the location the mothership indicated. (Did you hear, Leader? The rumors regarding the "Nahel Argama" of Team 4?) the communicator rang, and Daryl spoke as they were exactly 100,000km away from Earth behind them.

"You're talking about the ship that went missing after carrying out the secret mission of the Senate Council?"

(Yeah, the "Carrot" crew said that they saw it before the attack on Torrington, before we arrived there.)

Nigel felt a chill down his spine, and once he confirmed that this was simply a lone channel with Daryl's unit, "Oh", he

answered while pretending not to care about it. (It seemed that they activated the Ballute, and the angle's extremely acute if they were planning to enter Earth.) Upon hearing the rest of Daryl's words, Nigel felt the chill on his spine intensify.

(It's the same time as when that disguised merchant ship entered space. I don't feel this way, but Captain Bright's attitude has been weird…)

"Yeah, it doesn't feel like he wants us to chase after them."

Now that I think of it, it seems that the slow response during the Torrington raid was deliberate. Captain Bright would normally have us chase after the enemies even if our butts have to be spanked. (That Ensign Riddhe used to belong to the "Nahel Argama", right?) Nigel kept his voice down.

(And if he has any beef with the pilot of the "Unicorn", this so-called secret mission from the Senate Council…)

We can deduce it. The weird happenings that had been going on this month or so, from the Dakar incident to the Torrington attack incident all had the involvement of the "Unicorn" in it. It was a product of the UC plan—the crux of the Earth Federation Space Realignment plan, and though it was meant to destroy the Zeon myth of Newtypes, why would the entire army be up in arms for this? *He felt the sweat on his back freeze, and remained silent for a moment, (We see it!) But Watt's call caused his heart to jump suddenly.*

(L 8 degrees above. I'm going first!)

The rocket flashes of the Base Jabber ferrying the "Jesta Cannon " lit once he said this, and the accelerating machine faded to the top left corner. However, it was moving rather fast as it had only Watts' unit on it. (Oi, Watts!) Daryl yelled, but Nigel stopped Daryl, saying, "It's okay, let him be." He checked the source of light above the indicated location, and felt anxious that he did not detect this first, but he still activated his Base Jabber and chased after Watts' machine.

"The "Jesta Cannon" range is longer. Let him delay them first."

(But leader, he may start firing without telling the ship to stop first, you know?)

(GET OUT HERE, "UNICORN"! WE'LL SETTLE THE DEBT FROM BEFORE!) As Daryl expressed his concerned voice, Watts' bellow was mixed in, and as he saw Watts' unit charge right in, Nigel muttered to himself, "This doesn't look good…". Then, he let his Jesta leave the Base Jabber.

Daryl's machine too left the Base Jabber, and the two machines got lighter as they followed Watts' "Jesta". The "Jegans" of the Tenenbaum squad leave their "Clogs", got into battle formation, and started to accelerate; once Nigel saw that, he released a light signal, telling them that he was going to go first as he readied his beam rifle to fire any time soon. (We're the Federation space fleet Londo Bell. "Garencieres", please stop.) Daryl's warning voice echoed, and Nigel looked at the image of the ship on the window that was enlarged to the maximum. There was no signs of slowing down as the "Garencieres" continued to accelerate as its engines, most probably modified illegally, continued to let out thrust.

It has the "Unicorn" on it, that monstrous white machine. Nigel saw the thruster flares that were almost buried within the starry lights, and was shocked that he could not feel any sense of pressure at all. (The "Carrot" is…!?) Suddenly, he heard a scream from the wireless communicator.

He opened the rear monitor window to check the location of the mothership. The sight of the "Carrot" was there, and he saw it surrounded by blueish-white fireballs, creating a blurry image that dyed everything white. A silhouette that seemed to belong to that of a mobile suit passed by in the foreground, and an explosion of light that appeared again covered the ship of the "Carrot". (Leader !?) Daryl exclaimed, and Nigel let his machine do an emergency brake.

"Watts, return back! The mothership's attacked!"

His mouth consciously moved as he felt the G-force forcing his eyeballs out. *A raid? From where?* These fragmented words vociferated in his mind. He did not have time to wait for Watts to answer as he turned the "Jesta" while going above the safety speed limit. (Where's it coming from!?) (Is it the "Sleeves"?) he heard the messages through the wireless communicator as he accelerated the machine towards the "Carrot" deploying its anti-air fire.

The main cannons on the two flanks of the ship fired, and two beams cut through the space. An umpteenth fireball boomed after the pink mega-particle cannon shots were devoured by space, and in an instant, the enemy machine that were instantly lit moved to the belly of the ship. The body of the enemy unit's frame moved in

an arc, and the thruster unit on its back looked like a set of wings as it ostensibly soloed the "Carrot". The bazooka in its hand continued to let out consecutive trails of flashes, and the physical ammunition that were fired let out trails of gas, hitting the tail of the ship directly. The engines at the back of the ship were engulfed by a large fireball, and the "Carrot" shattered in the midst of the flash.

The expanding fireballs immediately cooled, and the ship that was severed in half scattered in the gas clouds that remained. (The "Carrot"…!) A certain person's cry entered Nigel's overheated head, and he looked for the enemy machine that was hidden amongst the debris. It leapt onto a piece of rubble, changed its course at high speed, and spun the wings on its back at the " Tenenbaum". The bright red color was captured by the enlarged window, CG corrected, and appeared in Nigel's eyes.

"A red mobile suit…!? That's…!"

The Second Coming of Char, Full Frontal of the "Sleeves". The machine searched through the database, indicated the name of the machine "Sinanju", and the mono-eyed enemy left the sensor while seemingly mocking them. It was still far away from Nigel, and he looked around, searching for the enemy machine that disappeared. The red machine continued to step upon the shrapnel of the "Carrot" that was scattered around, and accelerated towards the next pretty by moving in a zigzag manner without using its burners. It looked like a replay of the "Char shot down 5 ships" recorded in the war. He employed a blitzkrieg by using a "Zaku" to shoot down 5 ships—

The “Tenenbaum” started to create a net of anti-air fire, but the “Sinanju” dodged it easily, charged right at it, and fired its bazooka. *I’m still not in range? Nigel resisted the urge to click his tongue as he turned his anxious stare at the fireballs that continued to ignite, only to be taken aback by another light that came from somewhere else.*

“What…?”

The “Jegan” that was moving on his right side was devoured by the beams, and its ripped limbs were scattered everywhere. The beams then grazed by the feet, and Nigel hurriedly evaded. *There’s still another enemy?* He looked at the sensor that did not respond at all, looked around, and found a beam pass right behind him, hitting the Base Jabber that was following behind.

The Base Jabber engine was blown up, and the cockpit at the bow was blown apart. (Where’s it coming from!?) Watts yelled. The “Jesta Canon” fired a sweeping trail of shots at the enemy it could not see, but the beam attacks did not stop as the mega particles charged in from the back of the “Jesta Cannon”, while another beam came flying in from another direction, grazing Daryl ’s machine. (How many are there!?) Daryl called out. Nigel turned the machine and got ready to raise covering fire, but the strong killing intent he felt behind him caused him to feel a chill.

He lost all control over himself as he spun the beam rifle around and squeezed the trigger. The fire raced through the darkness, lighting something, and Nigel widened his eyes as he saw that strange object. The mini-object that looked like a remote-controlled object with 3 claws surrounding the cannons. It looked like an

eagle claw, and the thick cable from its tail was lit by the light of the beam before disappearing into the darkness.

"Funnels!? No, that's the INCOM…!?"

This was different from the funnels that were guided by the wireless system, but a psycommu installation that was wired and controlled from afar. The control was certainly better than a wireless system, but because it was cabled, there was a limit to the number of weapons that could be used. This still was a weapon that could attack in all directions on its own. Nigel did not make the mistake of chasing after that wired cannon at that moment as he only thought about how to leave the surrounding killing intent, and moved the "Jegan" in a zigzag manner as he looked for the main unit controlling the cannons. The criss-crossing beams caught a second "Jegan", causing the exploding machine to be engulfed in a hot ring of light. It appeared again, lighting the cabled INCOM, and the abnormally shaped mobile suit floating afar appeared in Nigel's sights.

The purple machine had a mono-eyed head and streamlined limbs. It certainly was a mobile suit, but that abnormally large shoulders looked like petals as they covered the head with several layers or armor, causing the balance of the humanoid profile to resemble that a monster. The abnormally shaped machine had blooming metal petals, and it resembled a rose as the cables at its hands slid like vines while it freely controlled the 2 INCOMs freely . The "Stark Jegan" seemed to have detected this rose with a savage presence as it dodged the continuous volley of cannons and

drew its beam saber. It used its beam saber, intending to cut the cable, and the missiles on its shoulders let out gas as two sets of missiles charged right at the purple enemy.

The rose-like machine shot out the high-output thrusters and flew through the vacuum at such a high speed that did not match its image at all. It accelerated towards the missiles, dodged elegantly. The missiles that were timed to explode in close proximity exploded, creating a flash. At that moment, it left the flash behind it, got down below, and the INCOMs attacked the " Stark Jegan". The smooth cables wrapped the machine, and the 3 claws stabbed into the abdomen. The "Stark Jegan" twitched as it got caught, and once it raised its beam saber, the beams fired from point blank, shooting through the cockpit of the "Stark Jegan".

The humanoid that was severed at the waist became a fireball. (This guy…!) Watts yelled out and let the "Jesta Cannon" charge forward as it fired the beam cannons and the Gatling cannons on its shoulders. Nigel saw the beams and the ammunition cut through vacuum towards the rose machine, "Leave it!" and growled as he slammed into Watts' machine. The tussling machines flew aside, and the criss-crossed beams grazed by them at the last moment.

"Our priority is to defend the mothership. A formation!"

The roar went in the opposite direction of the spinal cord (Roger !), Daryl and Watts answered in unison. *First, we have to regroup and lure the enemy away—though it doesn't feel useful against the monster*

Psycommu weapon and the Second Coming of Char. Nigel suppressed his true thoughts as he turned his back against the pursuing beams , and let the "Jestas" accelerate.

Daryl's "Jesta" and Watts "Jesta Cannon" followed, forming a V . The "Tenenbaum", which was was beside the icy cold debris wreckage of the "Carrot", was surrounded by numerous fireballs, and looked like it was about to be whiffed out in the wind.

Part 2

3 small flies escaped from the hands that were reached out to the maximum range of the psycommu weapons. They barely managed to dodge the mega-particle cannons fired from the INCOMs and escaped towards the mothership that became a fireball.

"Too slow. You're not going to have any place to return to now! "

Angelo Sauper smirked as he watched the three new machines, the "Jestas" raise their beam rifles and fire missiles. Of course, this level of interference was not enough of a threat to Full Frontal's " Sinanju", as the red machine passed through the shots fired from the 3 units and shot an umpteenth bazooka shot into the Clop-class ship, lighting a new explosion upon the 3 machines. The scattered shrapnel struck like numerous blades, causing the 3 "Jestas" to scatter away, and at this moment, the "Sinanju" released a strike to collapse the Clop-class bridge.

A final flash appeared from the middle of the ship, and the Clop-class collapsed as it was devoured by the fireball. “You see!” Angelo shouted, as he stepped on the pedal to move the machine forward, and recalled back to the INCOMs on its hands. The INCOMs were reeled in back onto the hands by the wires, and the 3 claws were clasped. The high-output thrusters set up all over the machine let out flares, and the large YAMS-132 “Rozen Zulu” raced through space.

The moveable frame was based on the Zulu-type, but this “ Rozen Zulu” had the Psycommu system and Psycoframe built around the cockpit, and its mobility was something the “Geara Zulu” could not match. There was nothing Angelo could nitpick about the Psycommu installation as he could clearly feel the enemy intent of the 3 machines attacking the “Sinanju”, which dodged the fires from 3 directions, reloaded the bazooka magazine, and squeezed the trigger to fight back. When the second Clop-class cooled down suddenly after being sunk, a 380mm missile head charged forward, releasing a trail of smoke, and activated its proximity fuse. As it exploded, hundreds of metal balls scattered, hitting into the back of a “Jesta” that could was evading. The missile head’s power could not match the mega-particles traveling at sublight speed, but with the acceleration of the “Sinanju” propelling it, it was not to be underestimated. The “Jesta” looked like it would leave the battlefront like this, but it quickly spun around to fire the beam rifle, causing Angelo to feel a shudder. Once the other 2 units regrouped and fired, that “Jesta” pulled its beam saber and closed in on the “Sinanju” without hesitation.

The two machines' beam blades clashed, and interfering flashes appeared. While the other two machines fired to corner the " Sinanju", the machine with the beam saber struck over at it, and the grazing high-heat particles severed the muzzle of the bazooka. The "Sinanju" lost its balance, but it immediately gave up on the bazooka and drew the 2 beam axes on the inside of its shield and attached them. The sickle-shaped beams blades were at maximum output, and the beams that appeared on both ends showed itself in the form of a weapon inherited from ancient Japanese Naginata.

"You made the Captain use the Naginata…!?"

1 against 3 was not the problem; that "Jesta" used perfect cooperation as a weapon to pressure Frontal. The "Sinanju" swung the beam naginata that was taller that itself with one hand to parry away the enemy's slashes, and swung the blades at the other two machines that were offering covering fire. The beams blades spun quickly as they acted like a shield, deflecting the mega particles released by the Cannon-type machine. Angelo saw that it looked a little intimidated for a moment, but immediately fired grenades from it; in response, he activated the INCOMs from its hands. The hands of the "Rozen Zulu" shot out, and the claws filled with killing intent raced through space. The cables extending several kilometers reached out like a ferocious raptor as it barged into Frontal's battlefield.

The INCOM cannons flashed out beams, and the grenade was shot through the hot particles, becoming a fireball. The "Sinanju" did not let go of this opportunity as it counterattacked, melting the left arm of the "Jesta" that was trying to parry. There was the calm will of faltering, fear, anger, and a calm will restraining these emotions, and the combined emotions from the 3 enemy machines raised through, forming a weak current in the perception, and Angelo felt a pressure pressing on his head, feeling incensed by it. *If I can shoot down the source of that calm will, the guy bothering the Captain, the remaining two units are easy to deal with.* Angelo dodged the missiles from the Cannon-type and locked its INCOMs at the " Jesta" that lost its left arm. However, (Angelo, there's no need for you to interfere here.), a line caused him to return back to reality. (Go pursue the "Garencieres". I'll chase up immediately.)

The “Sinanju” let out this calm voice as charged at the lights of the explosion, flashing its mono-eye. Angelo realized that it was the grip of the INCOM manipulator ferrying this message through the contact loop, “Yes! Captain Full Frontal.” and hurriedly answered as he reeled in the cables. *No, even if I don’t interfere, the Captain can control the situation.* Angelo felt ashamed of himself for doubting his commander’s power, and the “Rozen Zulu” turned away to leave the battlefield without looking back.

The INCOMs that were reeled in caught up to the accelerating machine, and attached themselves onto its hands. It seemed that the “Garencieres” had already caught sight of it, but it showed no signs of slowing down. Angelo had no intention of viewing them as allies any longer as he remained in battle mode, letting the “ Rozen Zulu” race over. This ship worked with the remnants on Earth without permission from headquarters, attacked a Federation base, and disappeared without any notification for 3 days. It had already taken back the “Unicorn” and “Mineva”, but did not interact with any friendly forces, but went right at “Luna II ”. One had to wonder, why?

He did not feel that Zinnerman would defect to the Federation, but he knew the new coordinates indicated by the “Unicorn”— where the “Laplace Box” was, and there was a chance that he would try to keep it for himself. Besides, he was an old Principality survivor edified by the Zabi family, an old-time who would worship Mineva Zabi like a goddess. They had to make him reconsider now if he wanted to get the “Box” and stir up the Zabi faction in Neo Zeon to take down Frontal. He spotted the “ Garencieres” which he could see in clear view at this distance, and

let out a final thrust. It was designed as a disguised merchant ship, but it could not escape this “Rozen Zulu”. “Suberoa Zinnerman, “ Garencieres”! This is Lieutenant Angelo of the escort squad!” he yelled into the communicator as he aimed the reticule of the beam rifle at the triangular prism-shaped ship.

“Slow down. We’ve already dealt with the Federation pursuers. Answer immediately.”

There was silence, and the “Garencieres” did not let out a signal at all. “If you disobey, we’ll view this as an insurrection.” He said this and aimed the lock-on red reticule at it, but the ship with the “ Libacorner Delivery” showed no signs of slowing down. *Is that so?* He valued Mineva so much that Angelo was incensed by his lack of respect for Frontal since a long time ago. “I’VE WARNED YOU! ” Angelo hollered as he reached the right hand of the Rozen Zulu forward.

The INCOMs shot out, and the “Rozen Zulu” extended its 3 claws as it bit into the flank of the “Garencieres”. It then reeled in the INCOMs that broke through the deck like a scythe, and closed in on the ship. It stepped on the open-air deck with its high-heels and turned its left hand to the bow of the ship, while the other INCOM was shot out, gnashing at the armor beside the bridge. The frozen air rushed out from the hole, forming a white mist. Upon seeing this, “I’ll destroy this ship! Get out now if you’re there, “Unicorn”!” Angelo yelled.

“We know from our information that you’re taken in. If you want to resist us, get out! This “Rozen Zulu” is made to defeat you. ”

The “Rozen Zulu” could not fulfill its real value fighting against the Federation mass-production units. It was built with the Psycoframe of the “Sinanju” spare parts and a unique Psycoframe terminal on the back, and the machine was built with the intention of taking down the “Unicorn”. Angelo reeled in the right INCOM, let his hands attach, and latched the claws upon the ship that should have the white machine with it. The armor plates were ripped like paper, and the short-circuited sparks and crystallized air surged out. Even so, there was still no response from the “ Garencieres”. Angelo felt that something was wrong, and then concluded that he was taken for a fool, “Are you ignoring me…!?” he yelled savaged as he expanded the claws jammed into the ship until its maximum size.

“How insolent can you be!?”

The face of that arrogant “Unicorn” pilot, Banagher Links appeared on the surface of the deck where the claws were stabbed into, and Angelo increased the output of the mega-particles to the maximum. The beams pierced through to the bottom, and the “ Garencieres” body jerked violently. Angelo then kicked the deck, used the momentum to move the “Rozen Zulu” towards the bow, and looked into the bridge through the window.

The hatch was still opened, and the bridge was completely empty as it was not in battle mode. The Captain’s seat, navigation seat and steering seat were all empty, and there was only weak reflected light from the very monitors on the consoles. The steering plate was set at autopilot, and though it was moving, it did not look like it adjusted its path after being knocked off course by the

cannons, and the alarm inside the ship was ringing through the contact loop.

Angelo could not believe his eyes for a moment. He thought that maybe the people in the ship had evacuated, and checked all corners of the bridge on the enlarged screen. With the noisy alarm ringing, there was a female digitalized voice that was ostensibly synthesized by the computer. That monotonous and unnerving voice was making a countdown. 5, 4, 3—

The hairs on his body stood as his limbs inadvertently moved on their own; he pulled the control sticks, stepped on the pedal, and the next second after the "Rozen Zulu" left the ship, an explosion occurred from within, blowing the windows of the ship to complete smithereens as the fireball shot out, ripping through the deck as it expanded. The body of the "Rozen Zulu" was knocked away as it got hit by the impact wave; Angelo's head and helmet hit the safety cushion with a dull sound, and he spotted the sight of the "Garencieres" scattering from the corner of his eyes.

The continuous explosions caused the deck to expand like a tumor, and the triangular-prism ship looked like a string of grapes as it broke from within. The large fireball filled his sights, and the ship that was crushed into several thousand bits of shrapnel danced with the impact as several of them were embedded into the armor plates of the "Rozen Zulu". The continuous impact noises shook Angelo by the heart and body, and he tried to control the " Rozen Zulu" and let it escape from the torrent of shrapnel. Once he checked the status of the machine through the condition monitor, he opened the helmet visor that had cracks on it. The beam scattered, and a pale gas remained in space as there was no sight of

that unique-looking triangular-shaped ship. There were a few remaining shrapnel left of the "Garencieres", but it had completely vanished.

"A decoy…"

He held onto the ball-shaped control grip as the voice came through his clenched teeth. They set up a self-destruct installation beforehand—no, it was most likely a system that would activate when it was attacked. Angelo's mind could not think calmly about why they did this as he only felt a bitterness of shame. (Looks like we've been had) at this moment, a voice rang, and he turned around to see the red humanoid machine of the "Sinanju" approach from behind on the monitor panel that was full of noise.

"Captain…! What about those three machines!?"

(There're always priorities. Are you hurt?)

The cold deliberate tone caused Angelo's heart to jump. *The Captain wants to check on my safety even if he had to let the enemy units escape,* he suppressed the hot sensation that was rising in him, and wanted to turn the machine around as he said, "I'll pursue them"; however, he was stopped by the hand of the "Sinanju". (You're still not used to the machine. There's no need to force yourself.) Frontal's voice rang as he stopped the "Rozen Zulu".

"I'm really sorry. This machine uses your…the spare parts of the "Sinanju", but I let it get wounded, Captain."

(Don't mind. The "Rozen Zulu" is at its most effective when fighting the "Unicorn". Just get ready before that.)

"But if this is a decoy, he…"

If they were using the unmanned "Garencieres" as bait to hide their whereabouts, the chances of them being in another space region was very high. (So it looks like the report of them making contact with the Mock Wooden Horse is true.) Frontal said as the monoeye of the "Sinanju" looked towards Earth. Angelo saw the face of the mask on the face of the machine, and could not help but gulp.

(In that case, we have to consider that they went in the opposite direction, towards the Moon as we're completely lured to "Luna II ".)

"Did that Zinnerman fall into Federation's hands?"

(Or he may be working with them. A human's heart is hard to grasp after all.)

The "Sinanju" released the hand placed on the "Rozen Zulu" shoulder as it broke contact. Angelo thought that it was not really possible, but Frontal's voice sounded like he was prepared for everything, and Angelo could only believe him as he followed the thruster unit that looked like wings.

(Return back to the "Rewloola". We'll continue our pursuit after that.)

"Yes! …Can we catch up?"

If it were just as Frontal concluded, the Mock Wooden Horse—the "Nahel Argama" may have pulled quite a distance to the Moon. Even if they were to turn back immediately, it would take an entire day for the main fleet, with the "Rewloola" as the flagship, to pass by Earth and reach a position where they could see. Logically, it was impossible to catch up, but Frontal seemed rather leisurely by this. (I have a plan) Angelo frowned as he looked at the "Sinanju" moving before him.

(Let's have our sponsor help out.)

Before Angelo could ask, the "Sinanju" lit its thruster unit and accelerate. It seemed that no one could ever catch up to the Red Comet, whether it was in thought or the capabilities of the machine…*which is why there's worth in chasing after it.* Angelo was in a near-intoxicated comfort as he subconsciously followed the back of the "Sinanju".

Part 3

(The "Garencieres" sank.)

Captain Bright Noa's voice came through the main screen, and upon hearing this, there were more than one sighs. After this one month of commotion, the ship that viewed as an enemy was defeated just like that—or rather, perhaps they could not accept how their hearts accepted the end of that ship so simply. "Is that so …" Otto Mitas let out air from his abdomen as he said. Liam Borrinea was standing beside her as she too sighed, folded her

large arms, and stared at the Fleet Commander Bright on the screen.

Behind Liam were the new subordinates, the senior navigation officer, the engine operator in work clothes, and Mihiro Oiwakken with a tense look on her face. This originally show but a private communication for the Captain alone, but since they were at Londo Bell's laser communicator relay satellite, this may be the last time they could contact Bright on Earth. Currently, they were completely isolated, and there was a need for all crew members to clearly understand the current situation, so he called in all the important crew onto the bridge. He actually wanted to let the entire ship's crew hear it, but the bridge of the "Nahel Argama" was far constrained as compared to the ship, and it was impossible to fill in more than 400 people here. In fact, there was not much space left to remain in after putting in 21 of the important crew members.

(The "Carrot" and the "Tenenbaum" that went to investigate were sunk too, and it seems that they made contact with the Red Comet of the "Sleeves". I suggested to the Senate Council not to scatter our forces, but…)

Bright took the 21 stares through the screen as he continued, his expression betraying some bitterness. After the attack of Torrington, he was stuck on the "Ra Cailum" that was still immobile, but he could be said to be in the state of being replaced. The Londo Bell fleet that was activated was drafted under the direct control of the Senate Council, and he could not identify their whereabouts; in this situation, this commander practically had his limbs sliced off. Otto considered how Bright felt losing the lives of

his subordinates, but at the same time, he realized that he may be next tomorrow, “Did the decoy work?” and voiced his current concern. Bright wiped his face to remove his sadness, (You can consider this to be so.) and raised his voice as a commander again.

(The Neo Zeon fleet chased after the unmanned “Garencieres” and went towards “Luna II”. Even if they are to turn back, it will take 3 days for them to catch up to you. The remaining problem is —)

“How…do we avoid the sights from the Federation army.)

Once he said it out, Otto again felt the heavy reality pressing upon his shoulders. He could not wait for any resupply or support like before, but from this point onwards, the “Nahel Argama” would have to avoid the Federation army and carry out this unorthodox mission alone—Bright glanced at Otto’s silent expression, immediately looked away, (That’s right, but I have a plan about this) and said with a flat tone.

(Due to the attack on Dakar and Torrington Base, the Senate Council is finally starting to take action. They feel that this show of Neo Zeon firepower is far beyond the scale of mere terrorist attacks and small insurgences, and are wondering if they should view this as a ‘war without declaration’.)

“In other words, they view it as a Third Neo Zeon War?)

(There’s such a view appearing, starting from Senator John Bauer. If we’re in a state of war, the Central Council will not be a closed room. In that sense, some of the hidden conspirators that

were supporting some organizations can't act on their own secretly .)

Bright said as his lips curled into a smile. John Bauer was one of the Defense Ministry Senators who led the charge in setting up Londo Bell. He often attended the meetings of the Settlement Issues Council, and had a deep relationship with Anaheim Electronics. Though Otto did not know how much Bauer knew about this, but if Bauer were to declare that this may be a state of war in this time, there would be no doubts that Bright was the one who offered this suggestion. If Bauer and company were acting, it meant that the media would take action. The world's view will be focused on the Senate Council itself, whether it would be a parliamentary hearing or something else. With the Senate Council being transparent like glass, and the Vist Foundation and the Settlement Issues Council could not make drastic interference, and they could not secretly deal with the "Nahel Argama".

But once everything was revealed, Bright's actions of letting the "Garencieres" steal the "Unicorn" and arrange for the "Nahel Argama" to make contact with it would undoubtedly come back to bit him. "Understood, but are you sure you're alright? Fleet Commander Bright?" Otto asked, and Bright shrugged,

(I used the Zeon remnants attack to snatch you back from the Senate Council. If it's revealed, it'll be a stripping of rank at best or the firing squad at worst.)

The commander of Londo Bell made a joke of himself, but nobody could laugh. Bright looked around at everyone, who remained silent, (Everything will have to depend on what you do now.) and continued heavily,

(You have to reach the coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program and get the "Box" before everyone else. Once we can confirm that the "Box" really exists, we can send out Londo Bell in the name of maintaining peace. If it really has the power as it says, we can use it as a negotiating tool to ensure our safety.)

"Yes. The estimated time of arrival is—)

"No, you don't have to say it. It's better for you and your crew to know, Captain Otto.)

Otto felt a chill upon hearing Bright's interjection. Bright was already mentally prepared to be brought in for interrogation-like investigations, and chose this action. Otto reflected on the weight of the fate pressing down on him, and inadvertently clenched the grip of the Captain's seat. (You may hate me; I understand that I'm going overboard for asking you to do this.) Bright seemed to have noticed this as his voice echoed through the air of the bridge.

(But we have no other ways of surviving on. I hope that everyone can work together with our new crew and get the " Laplace Box" before the Foundation and the Senate Council.)

Otto felt the added burden of the term 'new crew', "Yes" and said as he adjusted his position. Bright took a deep breath, *If*

possible, I hope that I can be on your ship too. and for a moment, his eyes seemed to say this. (I'll leave it to you, Captain Otto.) this line showed his respect for the people older than him.

(I believe that people are beings who get reconciliation through countless trials, and to all of you who managed to survive till now, I look forward to seeing your performance.)

"Are you saying this as the ex-commander of White Base that lived on its own through the One Year War?"

(Yeah.) Bright smiled, hinting that this would be the end of their conversation. He answered back the salute from Otto, and disappeared from the screen. A wordless heaviness descended upon the bridge, and Otto got up from the Captain's seat in a near instinctive manner.

He could not let the silence continue and increase the uneasiness within everyone. As he took the stares from everyone, he did not take the time to take a deep breath, "Everyone, it's just like what you heard", and broke the heavy silence with this line.

"Based on the information we got from the "Unicorn", we shall take action to ensure the "Laplace Box". We'll not be associated with the Senate Council any longer, and we may be judged to be insurgents if the Federation army finds us out."

Everyone's wordless face showed their inner anxiety and tension, and the 20 people in grey officer uniforms were looking back at the Captain. Otto clenched his fists that would tremble if he ever let go, and looked back at every single member in the eyes.

"Right now, the Senate Council has become a battlefield where the Vist Foundation and the Settlement Issues Council are fighting for authority. Since we're involved with the "Box", we may be buried in darkness no matter which side we lean towards. For us to live on in this situation, we can only take the initiative to take part in this treasure hunt that had been dragging us down. I won't say anything cool like 'prepare yourselves'. We have no need to die for this stupid reason, and so everyone, do not die. Remember, we shall fight on for survival, and our greatest resistance in this messy reality is to show everyone that we're living."

Everyone clasped their heels together and raised their hands to salute. Words alone could not salvage anything, and in this situation no one could accept nor give up, in this unreasonable situation—*nothing can begin if we don't look forward.* Otto convinced himself as he returned the salute, and sat back on the Captain's seat without look at anyone. "That's all. Return to your positions, everyone." Liam quipped, and everyone left the bridge in groups.

The 20 presences left, and the duty officers were left. With the rest gone, Otto could not help but notice Liam's stare no matter what. *Even if it's a state of necessity, did I say too much of my honest thoughts?* Otto suppressed the wavering in his heart as he looked up at Liam, "Captain." Who called out. "Is there a problem?", he asked back, and Liam walked towards the side of the Captain seat with her patented poker face.

"I've fallen for you."

Once she whispered beside Otto's ears, she showed a smile that could hardly be considered one. "I'm desperate here too." Otto

whispered back; Liam nodded, seemingly agreeing, and left the ship with a relaxed expression on his face. Otto looked around, saw that no one saw this, and sighed as he fixed his stare upon the window in front of him. He patted his face that was still blushing red even at his age, and looked at the space in the direction of the Moon.

Their current location from Earth was approximately 200,000km . There were no signs of any ships crossing by, just a blank large space covering the "Nahel Argama". They avoided the military's major patrol regions and flew by relying on inertia for 3 days—the coordinates given by the Laplace Program was still 100,000km away.

Part 4

There was noise on the binary file scrolling down the display board, and it blackout suddenly. Several seconds later, the screen reverted, and once it was reinstalled with the Psycommu system, the work was done in 10 minutes or so.

"This should be alright. I never thought that such a small chip can transfer the psycommu waves out…"

Aaron Terzieff, who was working behind the linear seat, said as he handed the chip over with his fingers. Banagher Links received this chip that was no bigger than a thumb head, looked at it, and then turned his eyes to the cockpit hatch in front of him as he handed the chip over to the bearded face of Suberoa Zinnerman

looking in from the opened hatch. Zinnerman pinched the chip with his thick fingers to his eyes, but those eyes seemed to be looking afar.

He seemed to be showing the bitterness of betraying his ideals, as his eyes gave a cloudy expression, not knowing where he was, and being unable to grasp situation. As Banagher looked into those eyes, “Is that the Psyco Monitor?” a clear voice rang from aside. “ Yeah.” Zinnerman answered as he turned his head away. The fatigue disappeared from his face, and his expression regained its usual sharp glint. He was looking at Audrey Burne, wearing a Federation army flight jacket.

“More correctly, that’s the transmitter. I heard that it’s a kind of process embedded inside the “Unicorn” Psycommu. Since technician Aaron has already cleared through the system, I suppose there’s nothing to worry.”

Audrey wordlessly brought her face to the chip she received, and tilted her head to ponder. Once he handed the chip over, Zinnerman turned a sharp stare through the inside of the cockpit. Aaron, who was inside, seemed to be afraid as he averted his stare, probably because he saw the beast Zinnerman was raising within him. This Anaheim technician got into an unexpected incident that changed his life all because he took part in the development of the “Unicorn”, and he obviously could not catch up to the quick changes during the past three days. Banagher left Aaron behind the linear seat as he left the cockpit of the “Unicorn”. The “Unicorn ” was at a corner of the “Nahel Argama” deck; Zinnerman, Audrey , and Lieutenant Commander Conroy Haagensen were standing at the gondola right in front of the “Unicorn” cockpit. Conroy bent

his hulking figure that was no slouch as compared to Zinnerman, received the chip from Audrey, and looked amazed and suspicious .

The Psycommu transmitter—the Psyco monitor was secretly installed on the "Unicorn" when it was held captive by Neo Zeon. Whenever the NT-D activated, it would receive the shown information and send it outside. If Zinnerman had not said about it, even Banagher would not have found out, and the latter again looked at this transmitter chip. "In this case, we won't have to worry about the Laplace Program" being eavesdropped on, right? Conroy said as he gave an affirming look. "This should be the case. " Zinnerman answered bluntly.

"Speaking of which, there's no need to worry about being eavesdropped on if the next target is the final destination."

This somewhat teasing tone caused the ECOAS member behind Conroy to tense up. Both he, who had the handgun on his waist, and Conroy, who took over Daguza as the commander of ECOAS, could not let down their guard against Zinnerman and his " Garencieres" crew. Banagher saw Zinnerman's expression sharpen , met Audrey's somewhat uncomfortable look for a moment, and interrupted both of them, "The latest information…the Neo Zeon fleet hasn't received any information on the coordinates the " Nahel Argama" is headed to, right?" Both Zinnerman and Conroy turned their heads, making sure their eyes would not meet each other.

"I just said that the next coordinates were in space, that's all. I don't know whether this will be the last time, but it should be fine

if the Psyco Monitor is removed. We'll reach the "Laplace Box" before the pursuers find us."

"Is this a Newtype's instinct?"

Conroy, with his arms folded in front, asked. *Eh?* Banagher blinked his eyes as he was unsure of what was going on. "We'll feel better if you say yes." He said as he turned his wry face at Banagher.

"Anyone who heard of your exploits on Earth will wonder how you are possibly an inexperienced student. Unordinary people have their missions. Even if you don't have any self-belief, you got to act like you have one, you have a duty to calm the people around you."

It was a half-joking line, but to Banagher, whose heart had sank so much ever since he went down to Earth, these were heavy words. He shook off the term 'Cyber-Newtype' from his mind, looked at Audrey, saw her emerald eyes that had taken countless burdens, felt the lump he could not share with her in his heart, and looked at the torso of the "Unicorn" with its cockpit cover opened. The giant with the lone horn let out a pure white glow after the dust of Earth was washed off it, and did not respond to its only pilot as it looked at the opposite wall with its emotionless face, covered by a face mask.

He looked down, and saw several mechanics surrounding the " Unicorn" mechanical manipulators, and behind them, he could see a large hand with 5 fingers. The armor was opened, showing the Psycoframe within it, and it looked like a human hand shed off its

skin. “Mr Gibney!” Banagher felt a little chill as he shouted out at those mechanics.

“How is it? Is the frame defective?”

“Not at all! The armor’s all messed up, but the Psycoframe inside doesn’t have a scratch. It’s the same no matter how many times I checked.”

The mechanic officer Jonah Gibney shouted back as he checked the Psycoframe with the inspection tools. Upon hearing this expected answer, Banagher’s grip on the handrail got strong. (What’s going on?) Conroy asked as he looked at him.

“I’m not the only abnormal one; This “Unicorn” is too. It can actually pull the “Garencieres” by itself. Wouldn't the arms of any ordinary mobile suit snap?”

The shredded armor on the manipulators were the scars left from back then, the consequence of grabbing the tether wire released by the “Nahel Argama” and pulling up the “Garencieres”, which resulted in friction on the hands and melting due to overload. However—

“But the Psycoframe took no damage at all. When I was fighting against Miss Marida’s Unit 02, our Psycoframes resonated and destroyed the “Garuda”…Mr Aaron, you took part in the develop of the “Unicorn” too, right? What exactly is the Psycoframe? I heard that it’s a metal that reflects the will of the pilot, but that’s not all, right?”

Everyone suddenly turned around to look at Aaron as he appeared from the cockpit, and he felt bothered as he tried to hide away. “I did see a phenomenon that surpasses the ideas of physics …” Aaron spoke up, but another stiff voice interrupted him. “Talk later.” It was Conroy, and Banagher was surprised by his unnatural attitude, but gulped slightly as he saw Conroy’s stare that was right at Zinnerman’s group.

This was not merely the level of being wary, but an expression that clearly showed hostility. To Conroy, Zinnerman and company were still Neo Zeon soldiers, the ones who killed his commanding officer and subordinate. *This isn’t it now,* Banagher wanted to speak up, but he could not as he could only look down at the floor. “I want to hear it too.” However, a voice caused him to raise his head.

It was Captain Otto. He stepped onto the catwalk along the wall as he floated over to them, and he hooked his feet off the railing of the gondola before landing perfectly. He did not respond to Banagher’s stare or Conroy’s attempt to refute as he passed by in front of them. “Before that, there’s something I want to report to you, Captain.” He said as he stopped in front of Zinnerman.

“The “Garencieres” sank, right after it lured away the pursuers, as we planned.”

Zinnerman’s eyebrows twitched, and Audrey’s expression clearly changed as she muttered, “So the “Garencieres”…”. Perhaps to her, that was the ship that supported her long life as a fugitive, the ship that was like a home. As Banagher tried to recall the appearance of that ship that once went through life and death

with him, "…Is that so." Zinnerman muttered, his voice entering Banagher's heart.

"As someone of the same position, I can understand the pain of you losing your ship. It's because we requested of you to offer the "Garencieres" that we can safely continue on, Captain. Allow me to thank you here."

After saying this, Otto reached his hand to Zinnerman, who hesitated before clasping the hand as he answered, "I don't dare to ". The difference in affiliation was not an issue as they both knew the burden of their responsibility; the etiquette between them became a form of warmth Banagher felt in his chest, suffocating him. Haste would not get the job done, and they were making the first step. *Everyone will soon certainly get along*. He thought as he turned his inadvertently smiling face at Audrey, but the latter's face was a little gloomy as she looked at Zinnerman's expression. Once she noticed Banagher's stare, her emerald eyes looked down weakly.

After that, she did not lift her head again, but stared at a certain spot as if she was cornered. Banagher frowned and turned to Captain Otto, "Then, Mr Aaron, can you please continue?" Otto said this, but Conroy spoke up, "Captain…" seemingly wanting to stop him.

"Lieutenant Commander Conroy, I understand your feelings, but I think this "Nahel Argama" has no line between Federation and Neo Zeon anymore. We have to let everyone know all we need to know for everyone to live on."

Conroy was overwhelmed by this forceful tone he normally would not hear, and swallowed his refute. Everyone, with Otto leading the charge, turned towards Aaron, and Banagher turned to look at him too. Aaron lowered his head, seemingly wanting to talk, but stopped as he clasped his hands in front of his chest tightly. After a short moment of silence, "Alright." He seemed to have made up his mind as he said this.

"The Psycoframe is beyond my expertise, but as I'm in charge of the armor materials department, I did hear some things regarding it. Please lend me a room with a monitor; there's something I want to show everyone."

Part 5

The large 150 inch monitor showed a small object similar to an asteroid breaking in half, creating a solemn sight of a large amount of fragments breaking. The visual was rather crude, probably due to the many reproductions, but they could still see a nuclear pulse engine nozzle built into the corner of the Asteroid and countless artificial objects built on the wall. The Earth was in the backdrop of the small asteroid, and as they had just witnessed its cerulean beforehand, it looked extremely refreshing now.

"This is the space fortress "Axis", and it used to be a base for Neo Zeon. During the Second Neo Zeon war, Field Marshall Char wanted to throw this "Axis" down to Earth to trigger what is commonly called a "Nuclear Winter", where the impact from the drop will create a large amount of dust that covers the atmosphere, cooling Earth down."

Aaron operated on the notepad terminal connected to the screen as he stood on the podium to explain. These images seemed to be part of his personal collection, something he requested of his good friend, contents of personal collection. Audrey, Zinnerman, Otto and company were seated on the chairs full of people, while Banagher was attracted by the paranormal scene on the screen. Liam and Flaste, Schole were also in this briefing room for pilot use, and the main members of the two ships were here.

"His aim is to make sure that Earth becomes an uninhabitable planet and force all Earthnoids into space, but was stopped by Londo Bell. The official report was that the "Axis" that was falling was broken from within, split in half, and the impact of the explosion caused them to deviate off course…"

The screen was filled with the blue Earth, and "Axis", which broke in half, let out a light from one side. It was unknown if this light was that of an explosion as a luminous rainbow flash covered the large rock, leaving behind a strange impressionable light on the screen.

"In fact, the impact of a break caused one of the pieces to accelerate and fall into Earth's orbit, so it seemed that there was no way of stopping it. But just when it was about to reach the atmosphere, "Axis" was surrounded by an inexplicable light, as you can see. And then, it left the Earth's gravity zone while seemingly being pushed aside by this light.

This luminous light veil that had light green, red, blue and yellow in it could only be described as colourful as it swayed about. This rock that was several kilometers in diameter was

wrapped in mesmerizing light as it moved slowly out of the screen . “This light’s just like that time…” Banagher spoke lightly as he sensed the surrounding anxiousness. The “Unicorn Gundam” Psycoframe let out a rainbow light as it took the weight of the “ Garencieres” with its entire body. “This is called a Psycho field.” Once the commotion subsided, Aaron continued,

“During the prevention of the drop, there were mobile suits with Psycoframes fighting against each other. They were the Federation’s RX-93 and the Neo Zeon MSN-04. Both machines were lost, so the details are unspecified, but this Psycho field that changed the course of “Axis” was thought to be the result of the two machines’ Psycoframes resonating, something born out of coincidence.”

“Axis Shock…”

Audrey spoke up, and everyone looked at her. “Martha Carbine of the Vist Foundation said this.” She continued as her face ostensibly reflected the light on the screen.

“It’s a physical energy that results from the resonance of the Psycoframes and the overload of the Psycowaves. The field of light created from the two “Unicorns” is the result of this.”

“That’s correct. There’s no other way to explain this phenomenon. In other words, we can only make this level of hypothesis.”

A ring of Saturn seemed to surround the light surrounding Earth as it extended beyond the trajectory, and the image suddenly

stopped. The light was lit up, and the white light shone upon everyone's stiff expressions. Aaron took a sip from the drinking straw and continued to explain,

"At first, the Psycoframe was developed to strengthen the psycowaves. These Psycowaves range were originally limited to around the pilot, but when different machines interact with each other, they may use the pilots as a medium to expand the range to the maximum. In this situation, the theory is that the consciousness of all the people in the field can be taken in…and some researchers tried to describe the Psycho field preventing the "Axis" drop as a collection of the thoughts of billions of humans. The united consciousness of humanity did not want Earth to be destroyed, and became a physical energy through the Psycoframe."

Aaron lost more confidence as he spoke, and a few people were laughing awkwardly. "It's practically a fantasy." Zinnerman muttered as his chair let out a sound. "I feel this way too." Aaron shrugged as he said.

"But there's one thing certain. This incident involving "Axis" caused a huge 'impact' upon the military. There was no reason, no theory, but the metals used to form the spare parts of mobile suits could exert enough power to move stars."

The air in the room that was about to warm up suddenly cooled down, and the smile disappeared from Zinnerman's side face. "I see. This commotion is not something a nuclear weapon can raise." Otto folded his arms again as he said grimly.

"Yes, the "Unicorn" power output increased drastically, and we can deduce that it is the result of the Psycho Field working upon the machine itself. If we can understand how to control it, it'll become a powerful weapon humanity had never seen in its history . The military will research on it under extreme secrecy, and the experimental machine that was stolen by Neo Zeon…the "Sinanju" , was for this purpose. Luckily, there doesn't seem to be much progress in this research. The only thing is that the relevant data obtained from the testing on the "Sinanju" was used on the UC plan."

And the "Unicorn" was born as a result. Once he understood this, Banagher realized that he was riding on something extremely incredible, and his shoulders shuddered. "Something that can't exist…" Liam narrowed her eyes as she muttered.

"Maybe. Some call them the Orichalcum of the Universal Century, but I would find it more appropriate to call them OO Parts. They're like the things that looked like lightbulbs on the murals of ancient Egypt, technological things that should happen at that time, and couldn't possibly happen. Those are things that scared future humanity 10,000 years later when they were dug up …"

Aaron pulled the long explanation to a close, ostensibly trying to hide his own embarrassment. There was a shroud of silence that descended upon the heavy atmosphere of the briefing room, not even the point of half-doubting. Banagher continued to look at the pitch black scene and reflected on that line he agreed with, "It's something that can't exist." But at the same time, he imagined the

aurora lights that covered Earth on the screen, and was mesmerized by it as it remained in his eyes.

It was a light that encompassed the wills of countless billion of people, and could push the stars. If this was a creation of a coincidence brought by the Psycoframes, there would be no mystery in it. *The actual fact is that miracles were created by man too, and that light's pretty too.* Banagher thought. The light created when it resonated with Marida's "Banshee" was terrifying, but the lift covering the "Garencieres" felt beautiful and warm. That warmth could gather the wills of the people present, and pass the warmth on the skin. In the harsh environment of space, the senses of the people, spread afar, meet with each other and resonate. This power formed the light, shaking the celestial bodies, and saved Earth as a result. There was no difference of Spacenoids or Earthnoids, Zeon or Federation, and there seemed to be a need to use a heart, isolated by space, to fill this wide space—

"…This can be one of the possibilities too."

He mumbled subconsciously as he let out these words, causing a wordless silence. With everyone looking at him, "Isn't this right? " Banagher stood and continued.

"I heard that the Psycommu was originally developed for Newtypes to use. Since the Psycoframe is an extension of this system, and it can accept the consciousness of humanity without limit, can everyone resonate with each other like Newtypes? At least there's a possibility—"

"This is too far of a stretch."

Flaste interrupted as he glanced aside at Banagher. “I don’t know how it’s like in the middle of the cockpit, but the people surrounding it did not have such self-awareness. In fact, humanity did not change after the “Axis Shock”. Earthnoids continued to pollute Earth, and the Federation army continued to be the dogs.”

These words were obviously full of spite, causing Liam, Conroy and the rest to glare over. “That’s more of a reason to give them this message, no?”

“Newtypes don’t have the specs of humans, or rather, I think it’ s something like hope. As long as we consider that humanity still has such possibilities, there’s no need to keep watching us sink into despair, right? If the Psycoframe was created out of coincidence, it’s definitely built to from the wills of the people chasing these possibilities. As long as we keep viewing the current situation as reality, there’s no meaning in living on. Humanity should keep chasing possibilities to enter and exit space like this… ”

I’m not being clear in my explanation here— he thought as he fumbled with his words, and the passion in his heart got drenched. At this moment, “This is a religion now.” A certain voice rang, causing a few people to let out awkward laughs. “It’s possible to understand if it’s a story…” “Once we’re older, such topics are…” some people continued, and Otto looked away disinterestedly, while Zinnerman exhaled and lowered his head. *We feel an invisible thing together, even if it’s vague, and before we can confirm it with words , we’ll break away from the true nature of it, and understand our hearts that are opened to each other.* “This isn’t it…!” Banagher felt

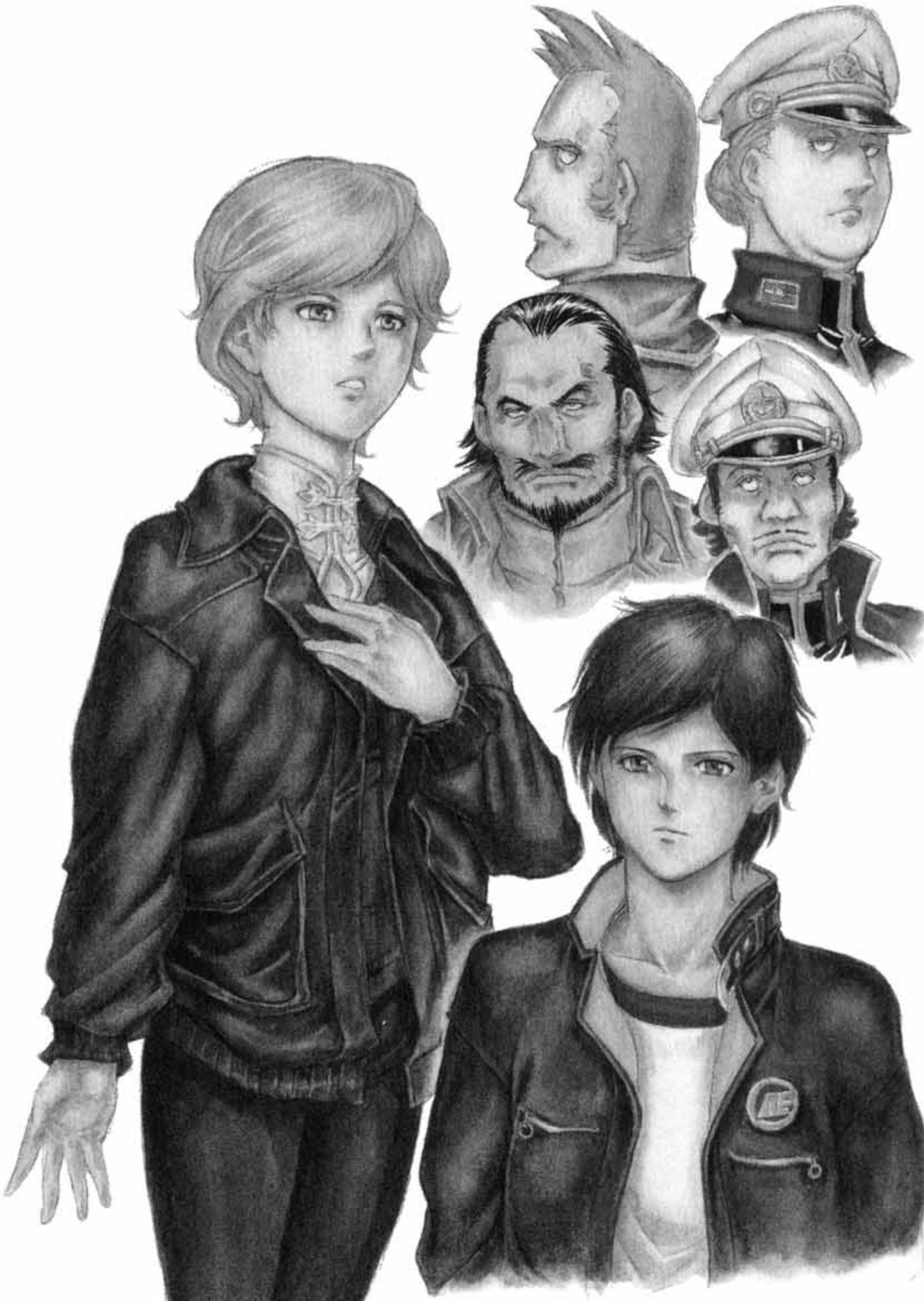
extremely restless as he raised his empty voice, but a voice interrupted, “I agree with Banagher.” Causing him to hold his breath.

“They fed it, not with grain nor chaff, but fortified and nourished it solely with the notion that it might yet come to pass… this was one of the verses of the poem exalting Unicorns written by one of the old poets. It’s a being that’s born of trust and raised, and this might be what Banagher is saying by the possibility of humanity.”

Audrey’s slender body stood up as she gave him a little smile. Banagher however was at a momentous loss of words as he looked back at her face in a half blank manner.

“Humanity can change, and it has a soft heart that can take this change. If not for this, I won’t have a chance to talk with everyone like this. We were still opposing camps trying to kill each other not too long ago.”

These stimulating words caused everyone present to feel uncomfortable and look away from Audrey. “And we can end up like this due to the efforts from everyone.” Audrey said as she looked around at the members of both the Federation and Neo Zeon.



"I won't say that we can control the Psycoframe if we can use this power properly…this thinking will only degrade this into a talk about efficiency. However, we can get along. As long as we don't forget this and foster our relationships, I suppose the " Unicorn Gundam" will use its Psycoframe…the power of people chasing possibilities to protect us."

Audrey's words ended off with a prayer, and she went quiet. Everyone recalled the words that were echoing in their minds, digested on it, and the silence in this quiet room intensified. Banagher too was no exception. Mineva was the Princess that inherited the name of the Zabi family, a name that was unrelated to him, and this girl's clear words shook his heart deeply. As he felt proud by her adamant position, he felt the lump of weight in his heart become heavier.

If this machine has such power, its existence will signify the gathering of the people here, and don't I have no right to pilot this "Unicorn" now? I need to know what kind of person this me who fought till now is. This thought slowly floated up from the bottom of this silence.

Part 6

The scene caused him to have a sense of déjà vu. There was the regular ringing of the ECG and the antiseptic smell that was stronger than the infirmary linked to it. The drip used for low gravity use continued to let its transparent liquid flow, transporting the minimum amount of nutrients through the tube into the left arm attached. The oxygen mask was removed, but Marida Cruz still showed no signs of recovering. Her bandaged

body laid down upon the bed, and her face was peeled slightly due to the burns as it faced the white ceiling.

This intensive care room was no different from the time when he was sent here, except that there was a flower placed on the table beside the pillow. Banagher looked at this radiant Yellow Carnation, and found that it was not artificial; if it was not kept within the freeze-dry supplies on the ship, someone would have raised it secretly. “Ensign Mihiro brought it over.” Doctor Hasan continued to focus on writing the medical records as he said without looking up.

“Miss Mihiro…”

Banagher thought of the stiff expression Ensign Mihiro showed when she insisted on strapping Marida in the straitjacket. “So Ensign Riddhe is still alive.” Hasan did not stop writing as he said emotionlessly.

“But even so, we can’t do anything. Everyone’s trying to accept this reality bit by this.”

After that, he gave Banagher a profound look, and joked, “Are Newtypes infectious?” Banagher felt his expression tense up, “ How’s she?” he asked as he looked away.

“There are some burn wounds, and her external injuries are severe. I’ve done all I can, but it’ll take some time for her to recover . She’s a Cyber-Newtype, but she’s not superhuman after all.”

“Then…what about her inner heart?”

Banagher could not find any other ways to express himself as he spoke with a vague tone. Ple Twelve forgot her name as Marida and went mad as an embodiment of destruction; it was impossible to tell which state she was when she was asleep. “That’s beyond my expertise, and I can’t specify clearly here.” Hasan frowned as he answered.

“According to what Captain Zinnerman said, everything was normal before she lost consciousness…but with her current situation, it’s a very subjective thing to tell whether she’s normal or not. One can consider that she may be suppressing her inner self, and the readjustments showed her broken wish. She probably doesn’t know which state she’s in now.”

Her master’s hope is her hope, her master’s enemy is someone she has to battle— she knew that she could only maintain her state of mind, and she thought that it would be right if she were to keep her relationship of reliance with Zinnerman. She laid a curse upon herself, and Banagher used these words upon himself as he clenched his fist, took a deep breath, and lifted his head.

He came to the infirmary after leaving the briefing room, not just to visit Marida. “She’s not the only one. Everyone has their own doubts.” Hasan intended to turn away and leave as he said, “ Doctor”, but Banagher called him with realization in his mind, and said the following words,

“Can humans erase their own memories on their own?”

"Well…if there's a severe psychological trauma, this self-defense mechanism will kick in. It may be a subconscious suppression of memories."

"Then, is it possible to be dominated by the memories that should have disappeared, and make us lose ourselves?"

He felt that he was squeezing out this voice that made Hasan frown in surprise. The unknown memories throbbing between his temples became one with him, a foreign language that could not be distinguished—"I want you to do a checkup on me." Banagher said to Hasan as he looked at the latter in the eyes.

"I want to see if I'm like a Cyber-Newtype, if my memories were manipulated, whether I have a modified body."

"What is it, out of a sudden…"

"I want to be sure whether the one speaking here is the real me. Is it possible that someone designed me to fight on like a Newtype ?"

He could hear Alberto's ominous voice, and Marida's murmuring, *Perhaps you're the same kind as me.* No matter the truth however, he could not look away. If the Psycommu could gather the consciousness of humanity, if the "Unicorn" could convert it into power, there would be a need to be clear about the soul at the core of it. If the soul was restrained by other people's thoughts, it would not be able to face the "Unicorn". Hasan was shaken by the pressure as he backtracked, and Banagher pressed on, grabbing

him by the torso of his white cloak. “You’ve already done a test to determine Cyber-Newtypes, right? Do it again—” he spoke, but was interrupted by another voice, “You’re yourself.” And this shocked Banagher.

“Even if you’re controlled by someone else, what you’ve done up till now won’t be hidden, and your existence won’t be denied. Isn’t this good enough?”

The curtain was pulled aside slightly, and the man got up from the bed beside him, showing a sharp expression. Banagher looked back at the fierce-looking bald man, and before he could understand what the latter was saying, Hasan hurried to him, saying, “Mr Gael, you’re on a drip, but I never permitted you to leave the bed.” Banagher looked at this tall man in pajamas, and those there were other members who were in treatment, Banagher never paid much attention to them. The man did not look away as he refused Hasan’s kind intention to lift him up. “I’m Gael Chan.” He reached his burly hand out as he said this.

“I’m really sorry for not greeting you formally. I’m being watched tightly by the doctor after all.”

Banagher was attracted by the gentle expression, and he too reached his hand out. It was a hard yet warm hand, and Banagher felt that he heard this voice before…after searching through his memories, he remembered the words he heard through the contact loop, and this shocked him as he looked at the man. This was the voice he heard when he clashed blades with an attacking enemy while investigating the remains of the Prime Minister residence “ Laplace”. (You have to find the real identity of the “Box” and find

a better way to use it.) (You must continue to live on and carry on the will of your father)—

"That time…!"

Banagher had forgotten all about it, and Gael, upon seeing the former retract his hand and backtracked, "That was rude of me at that time." Gael lowered his head politely as he said this.

"I tried to take revenge for my master and got onto this ship with the help of Zinnerman…but as you can see, I'm still in a lackluster position here."

"You…know my father?"

After he asked instinctively, Banagher shut up upon noticing Hasan's presence. The latter looked at both parties with probing eyes, tapped himself on the shoulder with the records, "Don't talk for too long." He said as he turned away, wanting to leave, but before the white cloak left through the partition of the curtain, a clear voice rang, "No, doctor, please stay." Banagher turned to look at Gael's face doubtfully.

"Now that things ended up like this, there's a need for the people on this ship to know the truth…is it alright?"

The last words were directed at Banagher, a request for him to be prepared. However, Banagher did not have any objective, as he wanted to be certain of everything because he felt that his body was not meant to serve himself only. His back was facing Hasan, who stopped and turned back to look, and nodded. "You're truly

alike." Gael's expression showed a gentle expression as his lips showed a smile, saying.

"The man who's worthy of being entrusted with the "Box"…the bluebird the Vist Family searched for a long time. To think that it was amongst their own relatives."

His black eyes were shaking as he harbored the relief no external party would know of. Banagher held his breath as he faced this bald Gael who knew the truth.

Part 7

After moving through the stationary satellite, he could recognize the gravity acting upon his machine. As he let gravity pull him down, he continued with the 4 hours of inertial flight, and spotted, the destination ship.

"It's huge…"

Nigel said subconsciously as he looked at the ship that was on the largest telescopic visual. As there was no interference of air, it was hard to grasp the concept of distance in vacuum, but they could imagine the scale of the opening to the dock and the mobile suit launch exit. He could tell that this was beyond the ordinary specifications from the mysterious shape shown with Earth as the background. (Is that the new flagship for the Earth orbital fleet?) (There's no way the "Ra Cailum" can compare to that.) upon hearing the voices from Watts and Daryl, Nigel stepped on the

pedal light. The “Jesta”, which lost an arm, used up its remaining thruster flare, accelerated a little, brightening the details of the large ship on the window.

It was the Dogosse Giar-class battleship “General Revil”, with a length of more than 600m and a maximum width of 20m; it could be considered the largest battleship in the history of the Federation space fleet. The hull with constructed with a giant elevated bridge and 4 modules, each functioning as a mobile suit dock. On first glance, it looked like a double-ship, but the connected blocks of the ship were shocking large, to a point where one could not find the weakness of a join. The mega-particle cannons were scattered like a hill of swords, and it looked like a lumbering shadow, like a human sitting with its legs stretched from afar. However, that leg itself had the mass of a Salamis-class, which made this Dogosse Giar-class a frightening large figure.

The ship could contain 4 fleets of mobile suits, and there were more than 1,500 active personnel. After the war, there were plans to build 4 of this Dogosse Giar-class, ostensibly the embodiment of massive firepower on a ship, but the remaining constructions were suspended when the first ship under the same name was sunk. One of the reasons, as pointed out, was that even if they were to consider the current need to assemble as many mobile suit fighting forces as possible, it would be extremely dangerous to over-concentrate their fighting strength in one ship. Another reason was that the current military objective was counter-terrorism, and people felt that a large ship had no chance of deploying. However, there was another thought that went against the grain of effectiveness, ‘symbolism’, ‘might’; this allowed the Dogosse Giar-class to see the light of day again. As

part of the Universal Century 0100 plan, the Zeon Republic would dissolve, and the space army would be realigned—and in the rebuild of the Earth' orbital fleet, this Dogosse Giar-class ship was deemed the most suitable ship to be the flagship of the fleet.

Thus, the second ship "General Revil" underwent construction, and after 2 years, it was in the official testing stage. It had not entered space formally, and the ship's loading was incomplete, but the bridge construct which resembled a city brought about a pressure beyond words. The Nigel, who was piloting the "Jesta" that looked like a resident of Lilliput in comparison, closed his relative distance to that of the "General Revil", while Daryl, Watts, and the remaining survivors of the Tenenbaum fleet followed behind on the base jabbers. The landing deck received the group that had not eaten for a day as they flew with the scars of battle, its indication lights lit up to form a glowing path.

(The ship's 80% fitted, right?)

Daryl let out a probing voice as he looked at the opening between the command zones. It seemed that as they were finally relieved to be able to land safely, Daryl was not happy by how this ship seemed to be bluffing about its might. Nigel turned his guide beacon over and said,

"I heard that the Vist Foundation sponsored it and pulled it out of official testing. I guess the spare supplies of the "Jestas" are here too…"

After losing their motherships, Londo Bell commanded its subordinates to meet up with the "General Revil", and that was

the only thing they were told. It seemed that the Vist Foundation changed the flagship through the Senate Council in their quest to get back the "Unicorn". It was impossible for the Londo Bell members, on the outside ranks, to get along nicely with the mainstream Earth orbital fleet, but even without this point, this trip did not look like it was going to be easy. Nigel sighed as he looked at his unit that had its left arm severed by the enemy machine. He hoped to at least repair it, and muttered to himself in his heavy heart. *I'm going to take revenge on that machine that showed me the fear of death for the first time, that Red Comet—*

(Whatever, I just want to get a good rest.)

Watts' muttering echoed through the wireless communicator, blowing aside the bitterness in his heart. He shook his head and looked at the "Jesta Cannon" following behind him.

(I don't want to be a homeless kid now. Ever since we got tangled with that "Unicorn", we hardly—)

Suddenly, an approaching alarm rang, interrupting the words from before. Nigel instinctively grabbed onto the control stick, got his beam rifle into firing mode, and looked at the thruster light approaching from behind. It got larger and larger as he looked on, and once it showed itself to be a humanoid mobile suit, joined their ranks moving in the same trajectory. (What the!?) Watts' voice was overpowered by the machine, letting out a trail of thruster lights as they flew by above Nigel, and there was a storm-like thruster pressure rained down upon the 3 "Jestas".

The black machine ignored its allied that broke ranks as it hurriedly stopped, and flew to their path. Nigel was the first to reposition himself, and gasped as he saw that machine descend towards the ship deck. This black machine that was one with space had an inorganic-looking face covered by a facemask. However, the golden crown was of stark contrast to the machine that was not decorated in any ways, and brought about an ominous impression —

"The "Banshee"…!?"

The "Banshee" turned its head over, ostensibly in response to the call, and showed the light from the gaps of the eyes. (Are you kidding me…!?) (Wasn't it sunk together with the "Garuda"!?) Watts and Daryl called out respectively, and Nigel looked at the " Banshee", which showed its agility the "Jestas" could not match, lighting its thrusters little by little as it landed onto the deck. There was a familiar presence that suddenly shot out from the back. *It's someone I know,* this instinct flashed through his mind.

It's the Cyber-Newtype I went past in the "Ra Cailum"…no, It's more familiar. It's someone with a stronger living presence. This pilot is—

Part 8

After passing through the automatic door, he saw a bridge that was much larger than any ship he had seen before. The number of active personnel here was not that much different from the "Nahel Argama", but the height and length was 5 times longer; most importantly, the ceiling was very high. Alberto Vist looked up at

the ceiling 2 levels high, filled with screens, turned to look at the large window made of absurdly hardly plastic, and made his two subordinates wait at the door as he stepped on the floor and moved forward. Captain Maseki Danbaev stood up from his Captain seat to greet the other man.

Alberto however ignored the outstretched hand as he grabbed the back of the commander seat. He got onto the seat in the same motion as when he was on the "Nahel Argama", "How's the collection of the Tri-Stars." and asked without looking back. "It's done." Captain Maseki answered. "Then, please prepare for launch." He said briefly, and reached his hand for the microphone on the console. Before the Captain could answer him, he pressed the call button and brought his mouth to the microphone. (To all forces on the "General Revil, I'm the inspector for this operation, Alberto Vist of Anaheim Electronics." He started with the speech he prepared beforehand.

"As notified yesterday, this ship shall cease testing immediately , and will execute a real mission as a direct operative of the Senate Council. We're to search for the Londo Bell ship "Nahel Argama" and secure the new mobile suit that's now on it. The "Nahel Argama" is suspected to be working with the "Sleeves", the Neo Zeon remnants, and have disappeared for more than 3 days. It is possible that they had made contact with the Neo Zeon fleet, and also, it's very possible for us to enter combat upon meeting each other. If there're still people thinking that this is just a easy and simple search operation, I hope that you will change your mood now."

The officer, probably a First Officer, turned his back against the bridge crew that had their eyes widened, and glared at Alberto with killing intent. *How can you make this decision on your own!?* He looked like he wanted to charge forward and protest loudly, but Captain Maseki stopped him, shaking his head to tell the other man to forget about it. It was strange for a civilian inspector to announce publicly like this, and he knew that it was shameful of him to ignore this as a Captain, but he could not be bothered in doing so. He was a man who merely put his life as priority and won this ancient-era ship as a result. Alberto ignored the captain showing the expression of shame and tolerance as he continued,

"The current situation is complicated, and we cannot expect any allied ship's reinforcements in this operation. This secret operation will have to be carried out by this ship alone. This mission really is unfitting of the name of the hero that led us to victory in the One Year War, but the situation is critical. The new mobile suit on the " Nahel Argama" is one of the pillars in the realignment of the space army plan, a product of the "UC Plan". If Neo Zeon takes it away, this realignment will be subjected to a setback. As the flagship of the proud Earth orbital fleet, this ship displays the might of the Federation, and this ship has to prevent any breaks from the realignment. I believe everyone had heard of the recent spate of Neo Zeon terrorist attacks, especially the news of the many civilian casualties in Dakar. The Federation army now has to be reborn and get stronger to prevent the same things from happening again. We shall hunt down the dissidents, eradicate Neo Zeon, and stabilize the Universal Century that's approaching its 100 year anniversary.

This is the mission granted to this ship, the mandate. Do remember that this operation will decide the fate of the Federation, and I hope everyone can perform better. That's all."

Alberto cut the mic and put it back onto the console. As everyone was silent due to being dumbstruck, Captain Maseki applauded loudly, and the First Officer and company could only clap unwilling. Alberto did not look at anyone as he left the Commander's Seat and let his body float to the exit of the bridge. This unpassionate clapping soon ended, and the Captain's command echoed hollowly, "All hands, prepare for launch."

Part 9

(I heard you made a brilliant speech.)

30 minutes later, he was in the communication room where the crew was forbidden to enter. Martha Vist Carbine spoke on the monitor, "Yes." And Alberto answered without an expression.

(So you got stronger after nearly dying? As expected, men will only buck up when they go to war.)

The eyes filled with a chilling light pierced into his heart as her bright lips showed a smile. He could not look back at this expression at all, and lowered his head, pretending to scratch his nose. "How's the situation there?" he asked.

After escaping from the "Garuda", Martha stayed at the Matsushiro Base in the Far East. It did not seem too far away from the Central Government, a place easy for her to keep her eyes on

them. (Anyway, Captain Bright's removal is certain.) Martha answered as she reclined back on the chair, and the expression on her face had the flair of enjoyment over the madness through the past few days.

(There's no doubt that he helped the "Nahel Argama" escape. Once the emergency repairs of the "Ra Cailum" are complete, it looks like he'll be sent to the Senate Council.)

"Can't we catch him and question him?"

(We can't. Senator Bauer of the Defense Branch and a few others are watching over him, and after so many troubles, the Senate Headquarters can't move. It took me a lot of effort just to deploy that one "General Revil". Also, even if we can ask Captain Bright, do you think he'll know where the "Nahel Argama" is?)

Don't know what you don't need to know. Captain Bright had been interacting with the vague presence of the higher ups in the military, and he obviously was not a foolish person. (It's just a matter of time. The "Nahel Argama" is somewhere between the Moon and Earth. Once the entire army carries out the search, there' ll be information.) Martha showed a slightly anxious expression as she took a sip of red tea, and continued,

(There's nothing big going on now, but Ronan Marcenas will definitely think of something. Your mission is to get back the " Unicorn" and get the "Box" before they do. I'm counting on you, you know?)

She narrowed her eyes and showed a probing gaze again. She wanted to see what happened to Alberto, who was abandoned on the "Garuda", and what kind of mental change it brought to him, and her expression was pointed at his throat, preventing him from moving. Alberto realized that he had changed, that he had a motive different from before. "…Yes." Alberto pretended to remain calm as he answered, but Martha did not look away as their eyes met, and showed a sadistic smile. (Speaking of which, how's the new sample?) she changed the topic.

(I heard that it's an adult male. Has he boarded the "Banshee"?)

"Extremely good. Unlike Ple Twelve, he's an enhanced human with adjustments later on, but his emotions are stable, and his compatibility with the "Banshee" is good."

He clenched the fists on his knees as he kept himself from faltering due to this sudden attack. Martha looked as if she could see the tension on his skin, and answered, (It seemed that President Bentner had died.) At this point, he could not stand the pressure as he averted his gaze.

(I didn't know the Augusta Research Institute has such a hidden ace, but in that case, I can relax now.)

"Relax…?"

(I won't have to worry about you being bewitched by a young woman, making the wrong decision, and I also won't have to get jealous. I nearly cried when I thought I lost you while leaving the " Garuda".)

His heart jolted as a result of his body being 'raised' for 20 years . Even though he knew that this was a lie, his heart still felt hot, and his body lost strength. He felt that he really was useless, lowered his head and gritted his teeth. Martha heaved out a sigh and crossed her speckles and smooth legs. (I'm concerned with Ronan's movements too, and I'll remain on Earth for the time being.) she said with a relaxed smile.

(Once everything is over, let's go to the Mediterranean for vacation. I await your good news.)

The visual stopped before he could answer, and the communication room was shrouded in darkness. Alberto leaned his arm on the console and took a deep sigh. He examined the mix of shame and delight within him conflicting with each other, and let his body sink within the darkness. Soon after, that darkness moved, and showed the presence of the other person in the room.

He wiped away his drenched face, he turned on the lights. With the artificial lights shining on his back, he clasped his hands, "Isn't it funny?" and muttered with his eyes looking down.

"The woman married to Anaheim trained the firstborn of her own family into her dog. This is the true reality of the family affairs in the Vist Foundation."

He lifted his head and looked behind. Riddhe Marcenas was leaning at the door beside the wall, not answering at all. He, dressed in the pilot suit of the "Banshee", folded his arms unhappily, and once their eyes met, he turned away disinterestedly. "I gave my aunt false information." Alberto got up from his chair and continued with a business-like voice.

"It's a sample data that's similar to your body size, Ensign. I don't think it'll be seen through easily, but don't appear easily. There may be people involved with aunt's dealings I don't know of here. If anyone knows that the pilot is a member of the Marcenas family, there may be quite a commotion."

It was troublesome because the speech he prepared in the ship reached Martha's ears. He stepped off the floor and let his body float towards the door, "Why?" but a question caused him to turn his head slightly. Riddhe looked back with a hideous expression as his body remained unmoved as he folded his arms.

"Why did you betray your aunt and let me board this ship?"

"I didn't betray her. The "Banshee" needs a pilot. It's not often that we have a pilot who'll give up his life to pilot a Psyco machine .

Riddhe's eyebrows twitched as he muttered, "I'll pilot it, you see." Ever since they left the "Garuda", his face became hideous, and it seemed to grow darker as the days passed. "And I want some insurance too." Alberto looked away and spoke with a deliberate cold voice.

"Leaving aside the people on the "Nahel Argama", even we don't know what's inside the "Box". In this sense, it will be beneficial to have you since you seem to know what's inside it, Ensign, just in case."

"So you realized?"

Riddhe said as his eyes moved. He revealed some things on the "Garuda", the history of the "Box" that started with the terrorist attack on the Prime Minister Residence "Laplace". "Yeah." Alberto answered.

"The problem is, what is recorded on it."

Riddhe averted his eyes that met Alberto's as he let out a vague voice, saying, "…It's a curse." His back left the wall he was leaning on, and he picked up the helmet floating in the air. He exerted strength on his shoulders, seemingly wanting to crush this helmet, and Alberto looked at his trembling profile.

"But these aren't important. I came here with you just to beat the "Unicorn". You can make use of me however you want, but I won't hold back just because it's the key to the "Box"; you better remember this."

"No problems. You can't beat the "Unicorn" without this realization. In the worst situation, aunt will accept it if we can prevent the "Box" from being revealed."

This isn't a lie. If he can avoid thinking of unnecessary things and make himself compatible with the "Banshee", that'll be best. This was why he revealed his conversation with Martha. "We want to get different things." After leaving these words, he left the communication room, and the door closed, covering Riddhe's back , leaving a dull sound that echoed through the corridor.

Part 10

The man shown on the monitor looked around 40 years old, was used to being the focal point of attention, and was familiar that he looked charismatic. To a handsome looking man like him similar to that of an actor, this was not uncommon for a role like his. But he was able to act like this so reasonably and yet brazenly, like he was facing a mirror, and this aspect could not be explained simply by his background and upbringing. Perhaps it was the unique characteristic this man had.

(I understand the situation, but it's tough for me too. The Republic's army is limited in movement. We need to gain the approval of the Federation if we want to move out of our own range.)

Monaghan Bakharov, 44 years old, the eldest son of the Ex-prime minister of the Zeon Republic who occupied the position for a long time, Darcia Bakharov, and the current defense minister. On the surface, it seemed that he followed his father's footsteps and pushed for the policy the Federation pursued, but he was secretly a rightist gathering the dissolved parties of the Republic, and the one stoking the revival of Zeonism. To Neo Zeon, he was a sponsor who had been supporting the Neo Zeon army quietly… but to Angelo, this man was someone he did not like.

He used his background of the 3rd generation of a political family as a selling point, and used his nice looking mask to gain the support of the people. It was still bearable to see that he, who was assigned to the space fortress "A Baoa Qu", viewed himself to be a war veteran all because he experienced the feeling of defeat deep within the fortress. What was most unbearable however was his overly perfect self-act. He always made others see himself as

the center of the attention, and act according to what the other party wanted him to be, but never put others in his eyes. If he were not a truly arrogant person, it would be hard to see him as something else.

There are often people like this amongst the 'guests'. Angelo thought of this, and he clenched his fist due to unhappiness. He deliberately moved away to avoid being seen on the camera, and looked down at the lush blond hairs standing in front of him. "There should be a fleet training far away." Full Frontal remained unmoved in the face of Monaghan as he spoke with a clear voice.

"You're the Ambitious Defense Minister Monaghan. I suppose there are patriots amongst the defense fleet undergoing training under you, right?"

Frontal said as his masked face showed the reflected light from the monitor, and his lips twist with a smile. Frontal's office was decorated like a VIP room, located in a corner of the "Rewloola", and over here, only the owner of the room and Angelo were present. Monaghan narrowed his eyes a little, (I should say that you've checked me here.) he answered, but his voice remained steady as if he was reading a script.

(I certainly do have the means to operate this, but it's not going to be fun bringing the Republic to the surface now. The recent commotions have made Zeon rather noticeable, though I do hope that the "Sleeves" can react better…)

"The incidents on Earth were caused by radicals on Earth, not planned by us Neo Zeon."

(But the world doesn't think this way. The Federation Council wants to use this chance to stoke the operations to eliminate Zeon, saying that this is the start of the third Neo Zeon War. Some people also insisted on investigating the republic—)

"And I heard that you still can't grasp the whereabouts of the " Nahel Argama" even through that meeting. It'll take time for our main fleet to move to the Moon, and even if we have to use the ships hidden in Side 6, we need even the tiniest clue we can get. In this case, the Republic forces surrounding the Moon have a better chance of searching through the area than the Federation."

Monaghan was questioned by this cold voice endlessly, and his expression faltered as he was at a loss of words. Angelo's lips curled up, thinking to himself that there was such a vast difference between those two. Monaghan's self-directed script was at a level of a politician, but Frontal hoped to be the vessel for the will of all Spacenoids and turned his role into this. At this moment, Frontal again put on his mask 'again', deciding to act out this role thoroughly. There was no way a vulgar man like Monaghan could compare to him.

Just continue on with that baseless Nationalist speech that has nothing in it. The day of Frontal's rise will come, and this man is destined to be the king for the abandoned Spacenoids, burning all injustice and bringing us to a pure world without stain. That day to rise will come—Angelo forgot about his reality as he was intoxicated in that awaited moment he imagined. (I understand.) Monaghan's voice seemed so distant.

(But since it's a mean we can only do under the tables, there's still a limit to how much we can do.)

"It's fine. As long as we know where the "Nahel Argama" is headed to, the escort squad and I will leave from the "Rewloola" first."

(I'll leave it to you. The current Republic army can't take a real battle, whether it's the equipment or the manpower. They're unlike the "Sleeves" now.)

"And the one who granted the "Sleeves" this power is you, Defense Minister Monaghan Bakharov."

To add on, Monaghan Bakharov was also the one who accepted Cardeas Vist's proposal and allowed the deal of the "Laplace Box". He forgot his act and showed a speechless expression before disappearing from the monitor, and Frontal stood up without showing signs of letting down his guard,

"It's just like what you heard. Install boosters on the shackles, and get ready for a long distance raid. It's about time to launch."

The order became a jolt that shocked through Angelo's before, and he answered, "Yes…!" Frontal kicked the floor and leaned his body to the window on the wall.

"But are they reliable? They lost all guts because of the clauses in the defeat, and the Republic army doesn't seem like one now. If we're to rely on guys who don't know how to fight for real, who only know how to yap about Nationalism—"

"It's possible. As long as we align our pieces, the "Nahel Argama" will report its position.

Angelo did not understand these words as he looked at the back of the bright red uniform. Frontal looked at the window, and his masked face looked into the vacuum, with no intention of looking back.

"A human heart is really hard to grasp…but hatred won't vanish that easily."

He looked at the darkness no ordinary person could peer into, and his back looked frozen as he looked into space. Angelo looked at the rose on the desk, clenched the fist that felt sensation of pain before, and left the office without a doubt.

There was no need for reason or explanation. He could die anytime for this person. With this new realization, Angelo floated his burning body to the corridor.

Part 11

"I guess this is the feeling when someone you know becomes a star."

Takuya Irei said as his feet hooked onto the handrail and used his hands to cup his head. He was wearing a mechanic's overalls, and his appearance of being thoroughly stained by grease resembled his old self as an apprentice in Anaheim. "Maybe." Micott Bartsch answered, and Banagher felt time had reversed as he looked at them, the same 'disjointed' school life he lived

through every day. He regurgitated on the memory of “Industrial 7”, which was ostensibly his former life, and felt the feeling that maybe everything was a nightmare, “Don’t say that.” He answered bitterly.

“But I’m me, right Haro?”

Banagher said to the toy robot that size of a basketball, and it answered energetically (Haro!) as it flapped its two ear-like discs. Before Banagher went down to Earth, this exhibition room was the last place where the trio met, and they were the only ones inside. They had their own things to do, and now, this was the best place to recap through the torrid events. This was the first time Banagher could relax like this ever since he was detained in the “Nahel Argama”.

Takuya was assigned to the mobile suit branch as a mechanic, while Micott was sent to the healthcare department; they were under apprenticeship, but also had to carry out shifts. They said this was better than not doing anything, and volunteered to do something; but the reason why they could get jobs was because the “Nahel Argama” had a shortage of labor due to the continuous battles. Either way, they were dressed in Federation work clothes, and looked somewhat more mature as even their faces looked as if they had grown up, resulting in Banagher feeling that he was abandoned somewhat. But to them, it seemed that Banagher was an existence that was far away.

“But you’re actually a prince of the Vist Foundation, right? Let alone being the pilot of the “Unicorn”; isn’t that too much of a coincidence.”

It was normal of Takuya to say this. With Banagher's agreement , the things Gael Chan mentioned reached the ears of everyone on the ship, and now Takuya and Micott knew of his heritage. The term prince did not seem right to Banagher, but he did not want to correct it further as it would be better than having them worry too much and not dare to say anything. Perhaps this outlandish remark was the biggest consideration he could say. "Yeah, I guess the reason why you're so popular is because you have that princely charm, Banagher." Micott glanced at him as she said this, and Banagher was further convicted of their consideration.

"Really? I never felt that way. I thought that he's just a blue-collar worker who's dazing around every day."

"That's why men are really slow-witted. You're admired by a group of people too, Takuya; you do have the flair as a vassal."

"A vassal!? I've become a vassal!? It's really depressing to hear it…"

The duo started to bicker again, but they were probably not bickering for the sake of Banagher, but for themselves. They needed this action to digest the current reality in front of their eyes and absorb it. As Banagher thought about this, he felt a little suspicious that he could observe others in this way, and looked at space through the large window.

The stars afar gave off light that could only reach them after several thousand years of travel. Everything began on that day, the moment he saw the "Unicorn" gliding through space. After that, a lot of things happened, he got involved with a lot of people, and

he changed. It will still take some time before he could bear the ' responsibility' Gael said of, and his power alone was not enough, but one of these days, he would have to face those things; what he wanted most at this point was power to shoulder the burden. Even if everything that was preplanned happened, the decision he made for every instance, every step he took till this point was of his own will, and not of others. The words of others pulsating in his temples, the scenarios he had been through, and the relationships he had with others formed the current him now.

Now, all he could only think of was probably to use the conversation with Gael as new flesh and blood to form a brand new self that was different from yesterday. He lowered his stare and looked at Haro in his hands. This was the only gift his father Cardeas gave him, and even though Banagher and his mother escaped from the Vist family, he found them, but did not come forth. Cardeas stood on the throne of the Vist Foundation, wanting to change despite the hostility within and outside, and was ostensibly careful not to let mother and son get involved in the politics. Even Gael, who had been working down Banagher's father for a long time, did not know anything about Banagher, and it was only after Cardeas' death that he knew of their relatiomnship.

"He's a gentle person, and he knows that one needs conviction and rigor to exert this gentleness. His rigor made him look like a cold and ruthless dictator, but that was the view of a person who did not know the meaning of gentleness. That's because people nowadays use the gentleness of irresponsibility to escape from reality."

However, this Cardeas wanted to hand the "Box" over to Neo Zeon, starting off a chain of battles and chaos till this point. The Foundation and Anaheim were the same in that their gears were established through war, allowing them to continue operating. This was what Banagher heard from Cardeas himself; instead of calling it a revolution, would it not be the idea of a warmonger hoping to reap economic profits?

He noticed Gael's expression, as the latter still need rest after the bullet to his abdomen, but Banagher did not hold back with this line alone as he questioned. If this were the case, this would be unforgivable. He would think of denying everything, including the relic called the "Unicorn" and the blood of Cardeas within him.

"I think there were appropriate plans made to counter the rebellious forces in the Foundation. Destruction alone won't complete the change. Even if we have to go against our ideals, we have to consider countermeasures to let all existing systems have a soft landing. This is a rule the adult society have when they want to start something…I suppose it can be said to be responsibility."

The term was unexpected, yet expected in a certain way; the term 'responsibility' had been restraining people, removing their ability to speak up, and was sometimes detested. However, if they do not bear that weight, they would merely become a powerless bystander in this world—and with this abstracted experience of reality, Banagher accepted what Gael said.

"In this incident, the one actively destroying rules was Martha Carbine. She knew of Master Cardeas' plan and incited the people around

her so that she could become the leader of the Foundation. With the righteous sounding theme of protecting their own interests, she instigated the involvement of the Federation and Mr. Alberto…in a sense completely different from Master Cardeas, Martha is also a binding cause of the Vist bloodline…an embodiment of the negative history. Restrained by the curse of the "Laplace Box", relatives continued to fight without ceasing; this is the history of the Vist Foundation."

Father killing son, son killing father—Banagher could only lower his head silently as he thought of the voice of his half-brother who may have died because of Banagher's own let down. Gael, who may have done lots of jobs that could not be seen under his father, showed a layer of gloom over his own face as he continued while trying to remain as calm as possible,

"I'm not too sure of what's inside the "Box" either. If it is just like what Master Cardeas said, that it can take back the promised future we should have…then, according to the meaning of the words, that means that the world lost the future it should have, and it is an incomplete world . The unchanging Federation continued to drive the notion that Earth is the center, and the Spacenoids are raised in the colonies. The independent movement that inherited the Zeon bloodline was absorbed by the economy , and the regimented conflicts continue without stopping…I suppose Master Cardeas must had some dream when he started giving you special training since young. The firstborn is as you can see, and there's no one to rely on, both within and outside the Foundation. Out of a sudden, you appeared as an outstanding child, and even from my viewpoint, I can say that you are a young man who was brought up very well. Yolu have the ability to think of how situations will play out, and at the same time, you have the essence of intuition within you. This is just my imagination, but

maybe Master Cardeas wanted you to be the successor and be the foundation of a world with a new system, rebuilt after the Box" is released."

"And mom hated it…"

She took me and ran away from dad. Gael looked away as Banagher muttered in his heart, "I can understand what your mother was thinking of." *and continued silently,*

"Of course, that includes the feeling Master Cardeas had, especially since he expected so much of you…I don't have a child, but I suppose his time with you was the happiest time for him. That was because someone could inherit his ideology and continue to live on after his death…which is the same as immortality."

That's too self-centered. The moment Banagher thought of this, Cardeas's dying expression and voice rang in his mind, causing the pain ripping his chest to fill his heart again. As he bit his lips, " But Master Cardeas respected your mother's wish." *Gael lowered his head intentionally as he spoke with a soft voice.*

"Perhaps he had already reflected on the consequences of forcing his ideals onto others stubbornly, the woman and child he loved leaving him as a result. No matter how old we are, men won't learn until they experience suffering once…I suppose him not appearing in front of him is the maximum sincerity he could show. You subconsciously sensed your father's thoughts, and your mother's thoughts too…it's because you understood both parties that you sealed you memories so that you would not be broken by it. This certainly is abnormal, and it probably is the result of your latent talent and your firm will; however, this memory loss

is definitely not forced upon you. Since the seal of your memories is removed, please recall back. Is your father someone who would drug you? "

The eyes were looking at Banagher straight on, and it was a piercing expression looking into his heart. Banagher could not think of an answer as he immediately lowered his head.

"If that's not the case, it would be impossible for you to pilot the " Unicorn". It's because you're recognized as a true Newtype that it led you all the way here."

"The "Unicorn"…"

"The Laplace Program the Unit 01 is carrying. It's not just a navigation tool leading to the "Box"; when the NT-D is activated, it will also determine if you're an artificial Newtype…the brainwaves of a Cyber-Newtype. Then, with the outcome, it will reveal the location of the "Box" in phases. Once the pilot is deemed to be a Cyber-Newtype, the Laplace Program will remain silent. It's because of this failsafe that he could hand it over to the "Sleeves". The "Unicorn" will never show the path to the "Unicorn" to the narrow-minded people who only think of rebuilding their country. On the other hand, if the pilot is a real Newtype …if a gentle person with deep insight truly exists according to Zeon Deikun definition, then that kind of person won't be limited by affiliation or self-awareness and will use the "Box" well…this doesn't just goes for Master Cardeas, but also for the Foundation Leader Syam Vist."

A person worthy of being entrusted with the "Box"—is a real Newtype. The first impression Banagher had of it that it was something seemingly baseless and nothing important. While he

was shocked by how Cardeas could release the 'key' with such a belief, he could only imagine his father's mindset later on when the latter could only rely on it; while he could not laugh at this, and this seed of resigned laughter could only remain in his heart.

It was truly a noble yet stupid plan. His father was certainly a radical romantic for betting everything on an unconfirmed concept . Perhaps he was someone who simply could not act as a cunning war merchant thoroughly, and could only focus on other things. This understanding matched the image of the man who was completely honest with his mother, and became an idol who Banagher could empathize with.

As a human, as a man, and after experiencing the weight of reality, he could affirm and accept the imperfection of others. Right , Banagher's father told Banagher 'I understand'; because he understood, he was 'happy'. The unease and hatred clinging inside his heart melted away, and the bitterness of being unable to convey these thoughts seeped out, blocking Banagher's nose. He would never see his father, and though he finally managed to reach a place where he could see the back of his father, he could not touch, could not talk with him side by side, and could not give a toast for the future—he could not even give his father a final drink of water, though the latter must have been thirsty after bleeding so much…

"Up till now, you've been recognized by the "Unicorn"."

Gael continued, and Banagher sensed his vision blurring as he hurriedly wiped his eyes.

"However, as for whether I can conclude that you're a real Newtype… this isn't something I can know of. It fits logically, but it's not a conclusion made by a machine. All I know is that you inherited Master Cardeas' firmness and rigor. That power allowed you to bring people together and make the "Unicorn" submit to you; I've seen it all. I won't say that this is a blessing, because this power will sometimes cause you to suffer. People follow you, and you have to repay their expectations. You will have lots of allies, and more enemies as a result. Things will naturally go well when you accomplish lots of them, but they will pinpoint the blame upon you when everything fails. When you inherit the aptitude of your father, you also have to beat this Cross. Now, what's driving this ship isn't military but you, the possibilities that you showed; the one uniting people of different backgrounds. You mustn't let them see you uneasy. Even if you don't have confidence, act like you have it and support that Princess of Zeon. This is the mission for a person with the same aptitude as your father…something called responsibility."

For some inexplicable reason however, he did not feel lost or revolted. As he merely felt the pressure on him turning into words, Banagher looked at Gael in the eyes with unexpected calm. *"I understand what you're saying."* Even the voice in his reply was very calm, and for a moment, he did not know if he was the one who said so.

"However, I have no intention of following my father's lifestyle. If I'm inheriting the Cross from father, I want to surpass him. I don't want to just bear responsibility, I want to…I don't know how to explain this, but I want to exist like a real Newtype, and I have even a little trace of this power, I want to use it well and become someone of worth. In order for that to happen, I mustn't be bound down by father's words. Thus…even

if I find the "Box", I won't know if I can do as father wants me to do. Before I find a way for everyone, including father, to accept this, I…"

He knew that his words were showing his unawareness of his own limits, and this self-realization made his mouth heavy by the moment as he lowered his head. He was already mentally prepared, thinking that he may have enraged Gael, but the latter showed a gentle smile, *"That should be the case."* And spoke without restraint.

"If this isn't the case, there isn't a meaning in the change of eras."

"Change of eras…?"

"The inherited thoughts that surpasses eras will evolve little by little as we await the future. The ones who finally reach the peak are Newtypes. Don't you find this to be the case?"

Gael smiled as he said, but though his idea was brilliant, this did not mean that the new responsibility Banagher bore would reduce, and he could not smile back. He was just trying his best to do the job, and did not feel that he was someone 'worthy of being entrusted with the "Box"'. The "Nahel Argama" would only team up with Zinnerman's company all because of the path Bright set up, and Audrey made the decisive push; he had the self-realization that he could not do anything alone, and if he were a real Newtype , there would be many situations where he should have handled things better.

However, Gael said that the luck to drive the people around him could be considered a talent, and said that it was a

responsibility for him to act according to the people around him when he affirmed this self of him. He did not feel that he could do it, and could not even pretend to look at he could. The conversation he had with caused him to feel added weight upon him, but also gave him stability that balanced and strengthened his footing.

He was relieved, not because he knew that he did not have surgery or drugs administered to him. There was a problem with the definition, but the thorough education of his father's ideology doctrine in his youth made him a Cyber-Newtype to some extent. But if this was something that was done for his good, he could only accept this. His parents' thoughts were clashing, merging and encompassing him. Once his stand got clearer, he started to believe in his power, and pushed Haro, which felt warm in his hands, into his chests. *They did not meet each other because they loved each other; mother lived her life without any grudges because she recognized father for his mindset—*

"But what will you do after this?"

A voice from reality suddenly spoke to Banagher, dragging him out from his thoughts. Takuya was using his feet to hook on the railing as he looked down at Banagher, his hands in his pockets.

"Assuming that we find that "Laplace Box" or something, what do you want to do after that?"

As Takuya stared at him, Micott was standing at Takuya's feet, looking over with an earnest look. To them, this decision will affect the fate of this ship before it can decide the fate of the world. "…I

still don't know." Banagher looked away first as he felt the responsibility becoming a weight pressing on him and delayed his answer,

"I don't know what's inside the "Box" anyway…what about you, Takuya?"

"Me? I want to stay in the military if possible. After the apprenticeship on the "Nahel Argama", I think I'm rather suited to this. What about you Micott?"

"Anyway, I want to head back to "Industrial 7" first. I'm worried about my family, and I won't have a future if I don't graduate from High School. Same goes for you too, Takuya."

As Micott described this reality with the thought of a girl, " School…we're talking about this now?" Takuya said with a bothered look, and her expression changed too. Perhaps she recalled the explosion that occurred at the school, the scene of the explosion that blew up the colony. Banagher looked at them, wanting to say something, "Let's all go back to "Industrial 7", then ." and spoke out what he suddenly thought of.

"The school's gone, but there are other vocation schools too. Let 's just transfer there and graduate properly. It's not too late to think about what we want to do in the future."

He said, trying to convince himself that he had a future, but there was no sense of reality in it. Takuya and Micott may have choices, but he did not have one, and as he felt doubtful about this firm belief he had, "Don't force yourself." Takuya spoke,

ostensibly chasing on, causing Banagher to look back at his face in shock.

"You don't have to force yourself to come along with us. Just do what you want to do, Banagher."

"I'm not thinking this…"

"You don't have to. I'm not trying to be sarcastic here, you know"

"Yeah, Audrey…Princess Mineva needs you too. Follow your own path probably and become someone who we can declare as our friend proudly. We'll cheer for you."

The duo unwittingly approached each other as they said this, creating an atmosphere where Banagher could not merge into, and the latter felt a chill breeze blow by. *Why can they decide on their own lives so easily? Because they're adults?* He answered his own question , and realized that he was the same too. He could not distinguish between what he wanted to do, what he could do, and what he had to do; the future was just a vague scene floating about, never to return. Once he found what he could do, he will complete what he had to do, and approach what he wanted to do. As they bore responsibility and pursue the happiness that was within arm's reach, everyone's heart had entered the phase of an adult.

The time to show the infinite possibilities of the future had ended, and this meant that the time to affirm that they were in reality had started. With this thought in mind, Banagher suddenly felt pessimistic. The narrow view caused by the self-restriction…

would cause the world to shut off—*in that case, will only children become Newtypes? Are they merely like measles who can't get along with the maturity of adults?*

I'm someone who can change, and when I restrict myself, I have to bear responsibility before I can attain maturity. The conflicting thoughts were in his heart, and he looked at the void outside the window as his sight looked for a place to belong to. Countless stars were sticking at the window, not moving at all, and it was impossible to imagine the ship charging forward at several kilometers per second. However, the designated coordinates of the destination was certainly approaching them, and time continued to flow. While his heart wanted the belief in possibilities, but there also existed the self in him that gave up right from the beginning, an uneasiness he could not share with Takuya and Micott.

The weight of the Cross he inherited from his father increased, and his body, with the potential to grow further, creaked. But whether he was a Newtype or not, he had a firm premonition in his heart: that this would certainly be the last chance before he could have such a time with them again.

Part 12

Marida, still unconscious, was like a sleeping beauty in a fairy tale as she was nearly fully serene. Perhaps it was because her blue eyes that absorbed much hardship showed her tenderness. *What will she see the next time she opens her eyes?* This notion flashed through Zinnerman's mind, and once he concluded it would be better for her not to wake up now, he clenched his fist. *It'll be best if*

she doesn't know anything. If she can continue to sleep on like this, it'll be—

There were no signs of anyone else in the intensive care room, and Doctor Hasan, who was originally in the linked infirmary, went by Zinnerman and left, saying that he wanted to get some documents. There were cameras on the ceiling, but why would Hasan be relaxed enough for him to let down his guard? There were many things that could be used as weapons here, and if he stole an operating scalpel, what would the doctor do next?

The cardiograph let out a regular electronic beep that resonated together with his heartbeat, and he felt the pressure deep within him rising. *What is this? What am I doing? What sort of person am I, alone in an ICU on a Federation ship?*

"You can hit me. You have the right as you raised me in place of my parents."

He recalled Mineva's voice in the midst of the silence. Once they were retrieved by the "Nahel Argama", she said this while both parties were in a standoff, viewing each other as enemies. She admitted that she was the one who started everything, and turned to face every single, unable to hide the doubt within them, and called for both forces to stand on a common battlefront.

"Everyone on the "Nahel Argama", comrades of the "Garencieres", we may be enemies, but at the same time, we're being hunted by our own armies because we're too close to the "Laplace Box". It's said that the " Laplace Box" has the power to topple to world—to some, it's a threat to them, a symbol of fear; to others, it's a power to break the sealed deadlock.

But no matter what it is, the "Box" is merely an item. Every point's point of the 'world' is different, and with that comes the various meanings of this "Box" that turns us against each other. The world where the Federation ruled everything, the ideal world of Zeon Deikun…our world was divided because we had different backgrounds. However, while I, we are members of society, we are individual humans. Each of us should have our own ability to feel the world, and not let our past history or someone decide it for us. Our birthplaces will not change, but how we live will give us the power to change ourselves. I want to use my hands to witness the true identity of the "Laplace Box" personally. Perhaps the truth hidden within it will negate the conflict between the Federation and Zeon, and open a new world for both sides; perhaps that may be toxic to all of humanity…but I want to confirm this. Thus, if there is a need, I'm prepared to abandon the world that made me what I am today…I'll abandon Neo Zeon."

Soldiers never had much imagination, and they did not have any feeing as to what the world would become of; if anyone asked them of their own opinions, they would be troubled, but the last line toppled all understanding everyone had.

Abandon Neo Zeon—this line from Mineva, and Zinnerman's decision to provide the "Garencieres" as bait, decided the fate of the Garencieres team. They were not imprisoned, and could move freely within the ship 'without division between Federation and Neo Zeon'. This was the result of the abnormal power shown by the "Unicorn Gundam", and also the words Mineva said to add on to it.

She was originally a smart girl, but assuming the identity of Audrey Burne for more than a month had made her grow up greatly. As he looked back on Mineva, who he had been taking care of before "Axis" was taken down, and watched for grow for 10 years, he was delighted that she was able to assume the knack as a leader. He knew that there was nothing to rely on with regards to the current Neo Zeon, and there was no place for him left as he had disobeyed orders, but that was a different issue from whether he was to work together with the Federation. No matter whether anyone wanted to cross the line, the Federation was the Federation, and Zeon was Zeon. The past could not be changed, and the present had not been changed; the reality shown in those eyes did not change at all.

As a Zeon soldier, he was riding on a Federation ship, breathing the same air as the same people who killed Fee and Maree, eating the same food as them; this was all he could understand, and the same went for Flaste and company. *The Princess and Banagher don't understand. We're soldiers; we're guerilla forces that are like pirates. We don't have any imagination, and we don't have the brains to associate ourselves with such noble ideals.*

The world divided by others, the world I feel—but no matter where I am, it has nothing to do with me. My world had already ended from the moment Fee and Maree were killed…

Suddenly, he sensed a stare. The curtain of a partition shook slightly, and something poked out from through the gap. Once he realized that it was pocket bottle of whiskey, he stopped himself from backtracking, and frowned. The gap between the curtains

was pulled aside, and the man lying on the neighboring bed showed his bald head, and the familiar eyes were grinning back at him.

"I said that I'll give you a toast if I survived, right?"

Gael smiled as he shook the pocket bottle in his head. Zinnerman had heard that he was undergoing treatment in the ship, but it was the first time they met face to face. Zinnerman scanned through his face that looked a lot skinner and the bandages under the pajamas, "Where did you get that from?" he asked as he received the bottle. Gael however merely chuckled and did not answer. His presence felt stronger while on the brink of death, and that was the bold smile of the man doing secret work for the Vist Foundation.

"I have to thank you for Banagher Links."

Gael said as he held the wound on his abdomen and got up. Zinnerman glanced sideways and looked up at his face.

"He's the son of what I consider my savior. If anything goes wrong, I won't have any face to show when I head down to the netherworld."

News of Banagher's heritage had reached Zinnerman's ears through Otto's mouth. Though Zinnerman was not exactly feeling betrayed, he was certainly shocked to some extent the moment he heard of it. As he recalled this feeling, "I never thought that he had the Vist blood in him…" he murmured. He turned his back towards Gael, who was giving him a probing look, and continued

to look at the sleeping Marida. *He's of a different breed too—he started from a different point, and his future won't be on the same side as me, that's all…*

"I never did anything worthy of being thanked for. We're the ones who were saved."

"But he respects you like a father. It's because of your recognition that he can get onto the "Nahel Argama" in this state."

Upon hearing Gael's baritone voice, the pressure in Zinnerman's heart got worse. *A father—are you kidding me?* He clenched the pocket bottle in his hands as he looked at Marida again, unable to pretend to act calm anymore. "It certainly is an amazing." Gael however did not seem to notice anything amiss as he continued,

"It's true that he has the charisma his father has, but that's not all. There's something that entered his heart, shaking up whatever's within hinm…"

"He's just a kid. That's why he can barge into other people's hearts without any concerns and talk whatever he wants."

"Maybe, but maybe he instinctively knew that it's better for him to reveal everything within him than to bear everything stubborn. We adults need to shed off our false appearances…"

Gael's wry presence shook Zinnerman as the latter turned his back on the former. If he were to shed off his pretense, he would be unable to hold back his urge to yell out, and took a deep sigh. "I 'm like this now." Gael's voice continued from behind.

"I want to help him, but I have limits too. I hope that you can watch over him in my stead. For the sake of this situation—"

"Don't overestimate me."

The pressure forced Zinnerman to his limit, and he released it in a forced voice. After exchanging looks with a silent Gael, he immediately looked away, looking for a means of escape from the silent Marida.

"…This doesn't suit me. I'm really not a trustworthy person."

He lowered his head and looked at pocket bottle he no longer felt like drinking from, and eked out this line, ostensibly trying to convince himself. Gael did not speak up, and the infirmary was so silent one may hear a pin drop. The sound of the cardiograph continued to echo, making a regular beep of the heart that was like a countdown timer.

Part 13

Zinnerman left the infirmary and hid in a blind spot of the cross junction. The figure of an officer in grey uniform shook, giving off a tense presence. Zinnerman continued on his way while pretending not to notice, and went off to the elevator in the gravity-free block.

The man in officer uniform pretended to pass by as he followed. Perhaps he was a guard, and the crew of the "Nahel Argama" was not completely nice. While they allowed the Garencieres crew to move about freely, they set up inspectors to check on their

movements. Zinnerman however felt relieved instead of annoyed as he stopped in front of the elevator. He checked the time when he left the infirmary, and the electronic sound indicating the arrival of the elevator rang right at the moment he expected.

He shook off the inspector who hurriedly tried to pursue them, and the elevator closed its door. Flaste was already inside the cylindrical elevator, leaning his back on their wall.

They looked at each other for a moment, and then averted them and coughed as a signal. There was no need for them to worry about the inspectors or being eavesdropped on, but there was not much time for them to talk. Thus, as long as they time the moment they get inside the elevator, this place would become a convenient secret chat place. Zinnerman did not look at the camera on the ceiling as he turned his head to the elevator door, turning his back on Flaste and asking, “How is it?” Flaste, who was leaning on the wall, “Just as we expected.” Quickly murmured.

“The logistics and personnel are insufficient, and the ones remaining seem to be rookies. The equipment management is also very sloppy.”

“Communications?”

“Only the bridge and the 3rd communication room can allow for laser communication. The security on both sides is high, but nobody’s watching the signal equipment giving off our coordinates. The specs are no different from Zeon, and Tomura should be able to do something about it.”

"Alright, the moment when we check on the next coordinates, the L1 junction will be the chance. Notify everyone, and get ready for action any time soon."

The elevator door slid open, and their meeting time ended. Zinnerman left Flaste behind, kicked the floor, and left the elevator . As it continued to head down behind him, he grabbed the lift grip and slid through the corridor. The red-faced officer coming up from behind was a crew who received a command to continue the inspection through the wireless. Zinnerman was amazed by their decent communication skills, and suddenly felt like playing a prank.

He suddenly stopped at the communication panel on the wall and summoned the visuals of the outside. As he pretended to look at the space behind him, he deliberately watched the moments of the inspector closing in on him. Unable to stop midway through, the inspector could only pass by behind Zinnerman. However, just when the inspector looked as if he was about to leave, he looked at Zinnerman's face through the reflection of the panel, and muttered something before vanishing.

Zeon Swine. Zinnerman reflected on these words that clearly echoed in him, and looked at the endless darkness on the panel. He still could not see the 'L1 junction' the next coordinates indicated. Before the Universal Century started, 'space lighthouses ' were built at Lagrange Points, but now, they became useless trash floating in space. *No matter whether the "Box" is there or nothing, we can't let it enter the hands of the "Nahel Argama". It's time to find a way to return to our world before we're completely immobilized.*

It can't be helped, he muttered in his heart. He had no intention of denying the world Mineva and Banagher saw, but he could not stay in them, and the Federation officer that just brushed by was the same. Humans could not become that sturdy and noble; they are restrained by their birthplaces, imprisoned by their past, and will hover in the torrent of trends they could not change. The only thing they could not was to make minor choices in the process, giving them the false feeling that they had control over their lives.

This is reality— Zinnerman stared at his face reflected off the panel, and muttered in his heart as he looked into the void. His eyes that appeared in this voice was duller than the stars, like two holes piercing through space.

Chapter 2

Part 1

May 9th, GMT 13:45. There were clear skies above Dakar, but the streets was shrouded in a gloomy smell of a fire disaster, and the rubble, which may take a while to be removed, were still scattered everywhere; however, the slightly black smoke shrouding the skies for several days had subsided. The sun, close to the Equator, was not blocked by anything as it shone upon the streets littered with ash.

Kai Shiden did not hate the heat of summer, but the scorching blaze of this African continent was too extreme for him. He put his coat, which he had no intention of wearing, on his shoulder, wiped the sweat off his forehead, and stopped at the Avenue Pasteur of the autonomous street.

He looked up at the large block from beyond the toppled trucks and collapsed buildings. 8 days ago, a mobile armor assaulted Dakar single-handed, and now, its large hill-like body was covered by dust-proof sheet used for construction, while its skeletal frame that was dissected was left on this autonomous street. The shoulder armors poking out from the sides were removed, and the cannon that was used to destroy the high rise building of the Hotel Empire was isolated, but this enemy unit debris looked extremely abnormal, its height being a match for a 10 floor building. Everything looked like a remnant of a nightmare left in the

wasteland of the summer heat, whether it was the maroon armor that could be seen through the gap of the plastic sheet, or the claw that still looked alive as it embedded itself on the road surface.

The path the mobile suit passed through showed the scene of a tragedy akin to that of a carpet bombing. The work to search through the remains of the rubble and the recovery of life essentials was going on; fire trucks and cranes were gathered, sirens were blazing everywhere, and the disaster victims were lined up in a single file in front of the hydrant trucks. On the other side, a GM type with a rifle was moving with its chin up, chest out, and disc-shaped transformable mobile suits flew by in the sky. *Did I bring a camera?* Kai subconsciously thought, and then got rid of this notion wryly. *I'm not in this position now. The ones in charge of reporting the current situation in Dakar is the current reporters working for the news agencies. If there were people making a news report of the people stepping on the glass scattered on the road, running out from the Senate building, they would be able to make it in time for the night news. Their immediate priority would be to prepare the report they wanted to send to their headquarters in their trailers, charge into the news center at the Central Senate Council hall.*

This was the biggest terrorist attack since the 'colony drop' 3 years ago, and it had been a week since the Federation government issued an emergency order. Rumors of a 3rd Neo Zeon war started to rumble, causing Dakar to not only become a simple disaster zone, but also a forum for government policies, an important place to interview more than usual. Kai glanced aside at the reporters who were frantically getting on the vehicles, and once he left the avenue, went off to the Senate Council hall he saw. The

Greek-styled pure white buildings lost most of the glass in front of, but it still preserved some form of emanation, showing that it was the nest of authority. The mobile armor used up all its power approximately 200m in front of the building, and its crustacean-like arms were stabbed into the ground, still showing the dissatisfaction of being unable to reach the throne.

He passed by the "Guntank II" that was as ridiculously large as the tank, went by a series of security checkpoints, and entered the hall. The lobby was filled with the buzzing of the lobbyists, reporter teams, protestors like usual, but the scene of the repair workers going in and out, the armed soldiers protesting, gave a vibe that this was different from usual. Kai followed the instructions he was given, rode on the elevator and went up to the 8th floor. He stepped onto the corridor that was well furnished like a hotel, and saw flags of individual countries and the entrance of the Central Senate office, where the Earth Federation flag was. After walking down the long corridor for another 2 minutes, he found the office of Upper House Senator Ronan Marcenas of the first constitutional area in North America.

He passed through the ajar door, and first saw a ladder used by the workers to change the light panels on the ceiling. He looked across, and found cracks covering a third of the floor, and approximately 10 general stuff members were in the dim admin room answering calls. He could see that the tables, totalling more than 30, were rearranged back to their original positions, and the dust and rubble scattered on the floor was already cleared up; however, this could not hide the signs of chaos brought about by the unprecedented tremors and shocks. The phones continued to ring at this point, and the contents most likely included the usual

contacts, catch-up, those trying to get benefits for the reconstruction, protests, or people donating money, holding to get involved with the military. Ever since the Defence Minister John Bauer mentioned about war, the people coveting the special needs of war started to take action secretly, and the owner of this office had the political power to pass judgement over their aspirations. The duty staff was gauging the importance of the callers, looking at the terminal monitor as they planned the schedule, looking equally tense.

Kai arrived a little earlier than the appointed time. There was no one at the counter, and Kai did not want to distract the staff that was completely focused in their jobs, and sighed as he decided to wait a little longer. He remembered that there was an ash tray beside the elevator hall, and took out the cigarettes he kept with him at all times ever since he started as a writer; he intended to leave the office first, “Are you Mr. Kai Shiden?” but a line stopped him.

“I’ve been waiting for you. I’m the secretary who conversed with you on the phone, Patrick Marcenas.”

The appropriately tanned face showed a bright smile; Kai read the reports on this man who was approximately 30 years old. He was the son-in-law married into the Marcenas family, and the first secretary of Ronan who was ready to get ready for a local election. Kai held the outstretched hand from Patrick, looked straight at the latter’s smile that was hiding a tense expression in it, and smiled back. “Please follow me.” After this, Patrick said and turned around as he passed through the office that was still buzzing with phone calls.

"I'm really sorry that we couldn't come out to invite you in. As you can see, we're still in a devastating mess…was the flight okay for you?"

"Yeah. It's been a while since I rode on a military transport carrier. It was certainly a special treatment; I wonder if it's because of the prestige the Senator had."

Kai's voice had some spite in this. Unlike the military, who wanted to restrict people from entering and leaving, all reporter-related personnel wanted to enter Dakar. While every major media center was spending large sums to get a few of their people in, only Ronan could let a freelance reporter ride in on a transport carrier.

"I'm really sorry, but at this time, we can't ensure any flight seats for civilians." Patrick answered as he faced forward. He glanced aside at Kai, and then, seemed to make up his decision as he spoke up,

"It's personal, but it's really an honor to see you. Actually, I'm a fan of yours, Mr Kai, not only for your talent as a reporter, but also —"

"As the weak Kai Shiden, a crew member of the original "White Base"."

Kai spoke up first, "Ah, that's not…" and Patrick, who was flustered, hurried up and looked away. This view was kept aside for a moment, but it was not uncommon to see people say such lines after seeing war documentaries through their youth. "A lot of

things written in the books are wild stories." Kai showed a wry smile as he reminded Patrick.

"Some writers have their own conclusions before they interview , and they won't change it even when I do an interview check for such people. All books related to "White Base" seem to be of this kind too, but it certainly taught me something."

It just so happened I came to this profession after the war. Patrick did not look at Kai , who continued on, and put his hand behind his back, lowering his reddened face. "I'm sorry for raising something I shouldn't have mentioned." Upon hearing this reply, Kai looked forward at the office approaching in front of him.

There were interviewers who look down on their interviewees, and there were also interviewees who manipulate the interviewers , wanting to turn the interviewer into a tower of propaganda for them. What was the reason the owner of this room, the Senator of the Settlement Issues Council, summoned him from Paris? It was impossible that he would be looking to ask Kai to write a biography after this Dakar Incident and all sorts of strange events. It seemed that this was a secret battle between Neo Zeon, the Vist Foundation and the Senate Council, and Kai heard of the situation through acquaintances in the industry.

Whatever the case was, this would be a tough battle for Kai. He raffled his grey hair and put on his coat. This undistinguished 35 year old looked like a proper reporter after adjusting his appearance. This was the first thing this young man, who was

enlisted on the spot while studying in High School, and survived the events of the One Year War on the "White Base", learned after leaving the secular world.

Part 2

(…In the past, the Principality of Zeon brought great damage to Earth through its blitzkrieg operations. Some felt that they had to do this against the Federation, which outnumbered Zeon forces by a hundred. But what are we getting when we do this? Up till now, we're just slandered with the name of butchers who took the lives of half of humanity, unable to shake off our hatred. One might say that this price was overly massive for a mere temporary tactical advantage. We, the people of the Zeon Republic understood this clearly. When the Dakar incident happened, our government sent in aid faster than any other side, showing that we are reflecting on our past misdeeds. We're decisively against terrorism, and though we're comrades, we do not recognize the existence of Neo Zeon. However, a group of people in the Federation Council associate us, the Republic, with Neo Zeon, and insist on investigating us. They use the merger 4 years later as an excuse, and it's not just one media stations saying that the Republic has gone out of control, which really upsets us. War is not beneficial, and we know—"

The moment the man on the television, the door made of Mahogany let out a knocking, and the guest and Patrick appeared.

This man Puerto Rican's face had a unique look, and he certainly was the one Ronan saw on the recent photograph. " Welcome." Ronan Marcenas spoke up and went to the door to invite him in. Ronan had learned, inherently through his life as a

politician, that being straightforward to someone he met for the first time and exerting strength of his grip was a way to take the initiative on someone; however, Kai Shiden did not look intimidated as he held the hand, deliberately showing a slight smile.

Ronan sensed that it would be a major obstacle for him to overcome, and let the other man sit at the chair of his office table, " Is there anything you wish to drink?" he asked, but was faced with an unfaltering expression, "No need for that." It seemed that this man fully understood how not to be led by the other party. *You can head back down.* Ronan told Patrick with his eyes as he sat down on the chair at the office, his back facing the window. Kai did not look at his actions as he looked towards the television, still switched on, with a relaxed expression.

The man answering the interview from some major television broadcasting agency was lamenting the difficulties the Zeon Republic had, and his voice and expression were full of pretense. " Certainly a melodrama suitable for the afternoon." Ronan finished, and watched Kai's reaction. The latter merely gave a glance and withstood the initial volley without expression.

"That's the Defense Minister of the Zeon Republic, Monaghan Baharov. He's a man who bears the tragedy of a defeated country, but he's working secretly with people of the old Principality, and has splurged a lot of money in the revival of the Federation. He's also investing in the rightists promoting Zeonism, even collecting award winning papers from the Republic Army."

"Award winning papers?"

"The themes are regarding the issues over safety and security, and basically, it's a selection test used to sort out the rightists. After that, the ones he picked out will be sent to important places, and if there's a need, he can use them as chess pieces."

"And this necessary moment is?"

"I don't understand that much, but they aren't exactly hoping to fight the Federation. The recent economic downtime had brought about an increase in the radicals, but most of the Republic still do not like to fight after what happened in the Wars. However, the " Sleeves" are using their main forces, the "Geara Zulu", which development's is partly related to Anaheim. The central party are the people from the old Zeonic companies, and some of those people are working under Monaghan's company…in this sense, we can't see them as playing games only."

He switched off the television with the remote and looked at the face on the other side of the table. If this were any ordinary reporter, he would be hooked on to this inside scoop. However, Kai did not have a single note as he merely looked back cautiously. *So a man who experienced countless harrowing experiences of life and death in his youth can remain this calm?* Kai's face overlapped with the mental image of Bright Noa Ronan saw in his own house, leaned his back on the leather, "I've read through your popular work" and got down to business.

"The "Sunset of the Giants", "Hell in Heaven"…each of these pieces had a unique entry point. There are a lot of these supposed anti-war reports, but it's rare to see such works with anti-war

sentiments like yours. Is this style due to your upbringing as a pilot on the White Base team?

Kai showed a stoned unsmiling expression as he did not answer this question. This boy was involved in the flames of Side 7 when the War started, was taken onto "White Base" as a refugee, and became a locally-enlisted soldier, the pilot of a newly developed mobile suit. It certainly sounded like something any war fanatic would like, a glamorous tale of a hero; however, the common understanding about him in many records stated that he was an opportunist with a vicious mouth. Despite that, he was trained by the military, and after the War, he enrolled in the Belfast University under the social reentry program, majored in journalism, worked at a news agency, and finally became a famous freelance reporter; it was said that a lot of young people respected him and felt familiarity with him.

However, such appraisal to Kai was most likely just a fetter, and Ronan could imagine this from his experience talking with Bright. As Kai remained silent, watching his own attitude, "But there's something I'm very concerned with." Ronan let out a probing voice.

"It's your viewpoint regarding Zeon. You doubted the Space Administration after the war, and revealed the truth about the oppressed Spacenoids, but criticized the activities of the Zeon remnant forces harshly…to a point where you seem to hate them; you're especially critical of Char, who led the Neo Zeon army. The reporters supporting the Spacenoids are mostly a little sympathetic to him…"

"Basically, the intellectuals who'll criticize such writing are the dissidents against this fad."

Kai shrugged as he crossed his long legs, and continued,

"That's why it's easier to accept a writer who writes in a way that sympathizes with the Zeon remnants. As for why I'm not on the same side, is it because I was a pilot who fought against Char on White Base? It's a conditional yes. Since I'm a little famous, I can ignore the norm of the industry and write on. If there's any basis for me, it's that I believe that the media isn't supposed to be a wind vane."

"Wind vane…being blown by the wind called the public…is it?"

Kai did not answer, and as their expressions of suppressed emotions met, Ronan decided that it was time as he stood up and turned to the window behind him. The newly changed glass dimly reflected Kai's expression, watching Ronan's actions.

"A certain politician wants to reveal extremely important insider information that has something to do with security. What will you do if you're that politician?"

"I'll call in the reporters from all major media stations and arrange a news conference. No matter what, that person definitely won't look for a freelance reporter."

This voice suppressed Ronan's thoughts and split his thoughts in half. His lips twist in a smile, "But that politician doesn't trust the media." and answered,

"No matter what that politician says, it'll merely be broadcasted for 30 seconds at most on the news. Even if it becomes a featured story, once the commercials end and the sports news begin, no one will think anything of it. There's the ratings, hits, printing numbers , advertising revenue. The bigger the media gets, the wind called the public will get stronger, and will air these many viewpoints as a correct view. In this sense, a freelancer's work—"

"Isn't as free as what the term indicates. As long as the economic activity forbids such releases, there are some rules we have to abide by."

"I feel that my insight can still distinguish which are the industry rogues that are only thinking of earning money, and which aren't. It's troubling if it's a weak idealist, but there are solid professionals who insist on following their own principles even if they do follow the rules."

Kai remained silent, not denying at all. *Very good.* Ronan exhaled and sat opposite Kai.

"Have you heard of the "Laplace Box"?"

Ronan saw that this reporter, who remained unflappable up till this point, showed signs of faltering. "I did hear rumors about it … " Kai lowered his crossed legs and muttered. "What kind of rumors?" Ronan kept watching Kai as he asked.

"An acquaintance planned to use this as a featured topic. The release was set, and the first issue was serialized on a magazine,

but there was no second print. A month later, even the magazine itself was out of business, even though it printed quite a lot."

"Once the advertising revenue is cut off, a magazine can't do anything no matter how good it sells. What about that peer of yours?"

"He's not in this industry now. I don't know what happened to him now."

"Maybe he's drowned in some sea or became some space dust. Maybe he was given a little bit of money to live a carefree life. It's not impossible. It's not easy to eliminate someone, even for the Vist Foundation."

Kai's silent expression showed that he had a minimum understanding of the black mist shrouding the Foundation's "Box" . "There's still 30 minutes left." Ronan looked at the clock on the wall, and said,

"There's a vote at the conference hall at 3pm, and I can only talk with you until then. After that, you can decide how to deal with this. However, I hope that you can hurry and notify more and more people about this. You're the only one who can do this and not let the truth be twisted."

Kai suppressed his doubt and tension from his face as he looked at Ronan's eyes for no more than 3 seconds. He reached his hand for the bag at his feet, took out a notebook and a tape recorder. Just

when he was about to press the switch of the recorder, their eyes met again, and Kai wordlessly put the recorder back in. Ronan smiled slightly and clenched his fists that were on the table.

"I have sufficient evidence to prove that the Vist Foundation is interfering with the Senate Council through improper means, and carrying out battles however they want. The aim of the Foundation is to retake the "Laplace Box" before it gets released, and for this reason, they created more unnecessary damages by having several small skirmishes with Neo Zeon, which is also hoping to get the " Box". "Industrial 7", "Palau", the "Laplace" relic; It's the same for Dakar and Torrington."

Kai stopped his hand from writing on, and the sound of the crane far away rumbled the air inside this air-conditioned room. Ronan took this sharp stare from Kai head out and took out a stack of information from his table drawer.

"This is a list of the Senate Council members involved with the Foundation, and they apply special counter-terrorist laws without the recognition of the Senate Council to deploy forces; even till now, they're profiting off the Foundation. If we don't reassign them and rebuild the command structure of the military, it'll be hard to hope for the revival of security. If this can get the media to use this as a chance to move, the prosecutors who had their heads pressed down by the Foundation finally have some purpose."

Kai flipped through the list of officials printed on the A4 paper, and looked back with a doubtful look. Ronan leaned his body on the table, and said,

"We'll do our utmost to protect your personal safety. Of course, the Foundation will use all sorts of means to obstruct us—"

"What can you get?"

Kai raised a finger to stop Ronan from continuing, and asked on , "This "Laplace Box" is said to have the power to topple the Federation government, and the Foundation and the government have a common goal to prevent it from being released. It'll certainly be an issue if there's improper interference with the military's command structure, but can't you do this before they secure the "Box"?"

"If it were that easy, of course, but the results are just as you see . There's a need to eliminate interference from the Foundation, unite the military with the government, and face this situation with a reformed attitude."

Kai snorted as an answer and leaned his back on the chair. His expression was saying that he would not accept such an answer; he was approaching using the nose of a reporter, but he was keeping his distance, watching if he was to be made use of by a politician—*this man's sharper than I thought.* Ronan sensed some difficulty, but also felt a delight of a long-awaited intellect agitating his sense, and tapped his fingers on the armrests of the chair.

"You're asking me what benefits are there for me, is it? A benefit I can get is that I can get a good night's sleep. I think about the horror if the "Box" falls into Neo Zeon's hand, what happens if a man like Monaghan uses it, the anxiety of the One Year War

nightmare reenacting again…this is what I want to eliminate. I suppose you should understand, since you're not affected by the trends and continue to notice the danger of Zeon."

Ronan did not wait for Kai's response as he again stood up and looked outside the window. The remains of the mobile armor stood behind the legislation building opposite.

"The Federation isn't as stubborn as what those calling for a change in establishment are saying. As long as there's an opportunity, this united government that's less than 150 years old can be toppled easily. As an installation and avenue of resentment outburst, Zeon's thoughts are too dangerous. Before the Republic hands over its autonomy again, just when this nightmare's about to end, this radical…the Vist Foundation has to bear responsibility. Also, the "Laplace Box" should be under the control of the Federation government. This is our common understanding."

"What do you mean by 'our'?"

"You can consider it to be the view of the ruling faction and military personnel not corrupted by the Foundation, with the Settlement Issues Council leading the charge."

"So you're using the chaos of the space army realignment plan to counter those giving unnecessary equipment in this counter-terrorism plan…is it?"

The pursuing expression was laid upon Ronan's back, and he hid the pain of being cornered, "This sure is tough." Kai did not show a smile, and his stare remained unmoved.

"It's true that a ship that can't respond quickly or a mobile suit isn't very suited for counter-terrorism, but even as the appearance of war changes, human sensitivity will not change that easily. There's also the thinking to preserve the prestige of the nation's authority."

"Preserve the authority…"

"A fleet that's deployed like a tall wall, a powerful mobile suit squad full of invincible warriors; such psychological impact on humans are not to be underestimated, even in this era of where information battles or special forces operations are important. A power that can be seen by the naked eye can cause fear in others, and prevent a second Zeon from appearing again."

"In other words, you want to use a high wall to surround the Earth by using the authority of the Earth Federation as guarantee, a tall wall with the words 'obey me' plastered on it, not budging even if there's a conversation?"

Ronan resisted the urge to confirm Kai's view as he narrowed his eyes at the latter, and felt a bitterness of being tricked. "I made a little investigation on your career before I came your, Senator." Kai again folded his legs and said,

"You brought about a wave of new life for the Federation after the War, and was a liberal, just like the first Prime Minister Ricardo…when you were nominated for the Senate for the first time, this was what the media was praising you by. In fact, you can be considered an anomaly for the Marcenas family after Ricardo was killed. The first thing you did after being elected was

to move to Dakar, right? There are several other places for candidacy, but you insisted on coming to Dakar, this land that may be buried by sand a hundred years later as desertification continues."

Ronan resisted the impact of the wedge striking him in the chest , and barely managed to eke out a wry smile. Kai put his clasped hands on his folded legs and continued without looking away,

"Earth was starting to show signs of recovery due to the Space Migration Plan, but the fact was that the destruction of the One Year War brought it to the brink of danger again. As someone pushing for policies, you had to often experience the urgent needs Earth had, to think of what you had to do next…at that time, there were some who said that you were doing this for the sake of popularity, but this isn't all, I suppose. You do have belief, you believe in improving human civilization, to continue to coexist together with Earth. You believe that Earth shall be the eternal homeland for humanity, and everyone should head to space—"

"That's a mistake by a reporter affected by Zeon. I'm not that much of a radical."

Ronan immediately interrupted Kai, but he could not seal off the sediment that was oozing out from the scar in his chest as he looked away and let his eyes waver. *Right, I did once think of it this way…* he muttered in his heart that was full of sediment, and secretly clenched his fists under the table. *If I were the change the nature of the Federation, the curse of the "Box" will vanish. If I can grab*

the 'future we should have' with my own hands, I won't have to fear the "Box", and I won't have to restrain my children with the curse of the Marcenas—

"And that you now choose to protect your power."

Kai said. Ronan's wavering eyes looked back at him.

"You, who once pleaded that humanity should turn their eyes to space, now fear the independence movement of Spacenoids like a plague, and want to build a tall wall around Earth. Why is that?"

"…Humans can't keep their vibrant youthful energy forever. Once you have the necessary responsibilities, you should understand. Is such an answer not good for you?"

He answered almost instinctively, and felt that he could not continue talking; this catastrophic situation suddenly brought about a tremendous fatigue on him as he sighed. Was this a sigh that indicated the wasted precious time, or was this a sigh over how his past was unexpectedly revealed to him? Ronan remained confused as he was unable to tell "I'm not really unhappy about this." He heard Kai's response, and sensed that the latter put down his folded legs as he closed the notebook.

"I do feel that I'm an adult too, but I don't want to forget how I don't want to see this in an adult."

Kai stood up while lowering his stare. "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to help you here." Upon hearing Kai's voice, Ronan knew that this was a conclusion to be expected.

"I'm personally interested in the Vist Foundation and the " Laplce Box", but it's not in my nature to be a negative propaganda tool. Please look for someone else."

"…Captain Bright Noa is also involved. Are you still not going to change your mind even after hearing this?"

There had to be a limit to his struggling. He knew that very well , but Ronan said it out. Kai, who was about to leave, stopped in his tracks and practically rolled his eyes as he looked over his shoulders.

"He's like you, unwilling to be a lackey thirsty for power, and got reassigned to the Senate Council as a result. Londo Bell's backers are protecting him, but it's hard to return him to his position as commander. I still have a way however if we can clear up the conspirators with the Foundation."

"Senator Ronan, I don't want to think that being shameless in your actions is what an adult should be."

The growl caused Ronan to experience a second stab in his chest again. "You should be able to understand." Kai said and turned away again.

"It's okay to turn rogue, but for someone like you with such a standing, I hope you don't show how much you have fallen. Did your son not leave the house because he could not take it?"

It was the final lunge at his wound, and Kai left the room without looking back. *This isn't true*, Ronan wanted to yell out, but

could not as he watched Kai leave wordlessly. He could not bring himself to call Patrick to send the guest away, and his eyes, which had nowhere to go, escaped upon the photos hanging on the wall. These were photos of himself, whether it was when he appeared on the cover of a weekly magazine, the photo with the Prime Minister back then during the memorial of the end of the War, and so on. Amongst all these photos that clearly showed any passers-by his decorated career as a politician, there was a photo of him with his family and the recently built Senate Council hall in the background.

There was his wife, narrowing her eyes, ostensibly complaining that the sunlight in Africa was too strong, Cynthia, who was in the vibrancy of her youth, and Riddhe, who was less than 10 years old. As Ronan stood there, unable to show a sincere smile once he started to understand the rule that this world could not change, Riddhe was showing a weird stiff smile beside him. At that time, he would mimic Ronan's own actions which he somehow saw, and was often reprimanded by his mother. In fact, Riddhe, who seemed to be giving an adult-manufactured smile, looked just as pitiful as Ronan was.

Right, that child understood. Ronan looked at the door and imagined Kai's back on it, telling himself the words he could not say out. *That child understood everything and accepted the destiny of the Marcenas family. I let that child bear the burden of the "Box". I wanted to change everything in this generation, but I couldn't do anything, and added the burden of my father and grandfather upon him.*

Ever since the battle of Torrington, there was no news of Riddhe . His "Delta Plus" was reclaimed safely, so he probably was not

hurt. This news alone was enough for Ronan. No matter where Riddhe was, no matter what happened to him, he would not betray the Marcenas' destiny. Even though others could not understand, he could firmly believe so.

That was why he was suffering, that was why he was in pain. Ronan imagined that silhouette similar to his own, suffering from the despair in a place Ronan could not see—a man who never had pressure before would not understand. Ronan looked away from the old family photo, and let out a deep sigh. The rumbling of the cranes outside shook the air in the room, slowly stirring at the emptiness that came with this time.

Part 3

"A secret code used during the war?"

The body floated down the ramp tilted at a tight angle, and went from the hatch on the floor into the bridge. Gilligan Eustace grabbed onto the handrail at the door, and before the magnets on his soles landed on the floor, there was a reply from the Captain's seat. "It looks like it's the same one used during the drop on Earth" Upon hearing this, he trembled with excitement.

"The signal beacon sent has been pinging the same code. We're still analyzing the contents."

"Location?"

"In the middle of L1. It seems to be near the 'light tower'. The ship has been slowing down since just now…"

Captain Hohgy said as he pointed his chin at the navigation window on the left side of the screen. It was not a distance where they could do anything immediately, but Hohgy's completely relaxed expression made Gilligan unhappy within. After 10 years of military life that did not seem like one, Hohgy ended up with this face that had completely forgotten what it meant to be a warrior. At Gilligan's own age, this man was involved in real battles against the Federation.

"No doubts about it. This is the ship Lord Monaghan told us of, the "Mock Wooden Horse" of the "Nahel Argama"…"

Gilligan did not look at the face of the Captain, but exchanged looks with the navigation officer, a comrade, holding the steer at the steering seat. The navigation officer facing, looking extremely excited for having a real mission for the first time. The cannons operator, the ship operator and the rest were all feeling excited too, and there were 5 of these cadres working on the bridge. These faces would soon create new history for the Zeon Republic. People like Hohky, who were filled with the knowledge of defeat, the adults who did not accomplish anything, did not have the power to stop them. As Gilligan decided this in his heart, "Tell our country and the "Sleeves" he commanded to the communication operator on the starboard terminal.

"Also, captain. Our "Gulltoppr" will link up with the "Dromi", and we'll carry out tracking and observation of the "Mock Wooden Horse". I hope that we can immediately break ranks and head to L1."

As Gilligan acted in insubordination as he said these words, the other cadres had their eyes focused on the Captain's seat. Hohky could not hide the surprised on his face, "What about the support of the training fleet?" he asked with a restrained ship.

"We'll let the "Bifrest" continue on alone. This is an official port call given to us; we have to let the fleet commander complete it."

"This is against the treaty! Our army is forbidden from fighting outside our territory without any request from the Federation."

"The fleet commander has known about it. The main forces of the "Sleeves" will reach the scene, and it'll take a day at least to reach there. It's completely useless if everything ends on this call alone…and even if anything happens, Lord Monaghan will deal with it appropriately."

"This is different from what was agreed on! We're just in charge of searching, and the rest—"

"Captain, this is the next objective given to the "Wind Assembly"."

The firm voice caused Hohky's expression to change. This man had no ambitions, and just wanted to just have a peaceful life in the military and wait for his retirement funds to arrive. What misstep did he take to be dragged into the "Wind's Assembly"? Perhaps it was when the superior officer taking care of him invited him to the study meet, and he was gradually involved in it. However, the "Wind's Assembly" did not assign its important members around for show. If Hohky intended to let this once in a

blue moon opportunity slip away, there would be a need to drag him down from the Captain's seat. Gilligan stamped on the floor and let his body approach Hohky, whose legs were all limp with fear.

Think of how you could dislodge your peer and become a Captain. Did you think it's because of ability?"

"You bastard, you dare to be so insolent to your sup—"

"It's because you're a superior that I'm saying this. Please don't forget, that when we reveal the information to the "Sleeves", we're already straying off from our lives as Republic soldiers."

Since the past, the captain had been considered a god on the ship, someone with absolute authority; now, this captain is treated like this, but Hokhy's face was red for only an instant. His widened eyes suddenly lost strength, and his shoulders slumped, seemingly having given up, and looked away, ostensibly unable to think of anything else to say. *What a pitiful man.* Gilligan did not want to waste any time chastising this man, left the Captain's seat, and floated his body to the window in front.

"The Musai Kai-class "Gulltoppr" bridge was constructed not too differently from the original old Republic ship, the Musai-class. It was a simple bridge with a large window typical of the current Minovsky Era, and all the functions could be gathered on this one floor. This extremely sturdy plastic window that was 2m wide and no less than 8m in length was at this point showing the ships of the Chivvay-class heavy training ships, and the navigation lights of the fleet flagship "Bifrest" could be seen further in front. It was

impossible to see from this point, but there was a Chivvay-class training ship behind the “Gulltoppr”, and the “Dromi”, also of the Musai Kai-class, was acting as the vanguard. They were in a packed linear formation, surrounding the training ship; this was a basic formation in a offshore space training. In space, the distance of 2km would pass easily, so they had to watch each other’s position to prevent the rear ships from crashing into the front. The ships slowed down do to the unexpected change in course, and the rookies on the training ship were starting to decode the beacon signal.

The guards fleet commander on the flagship “Bifrest” was one of the few survivors of the space mothership “Doros” that was sunk during the War. He was one of the adults in the Republic after the War, but could not help but keep thinking of aligning with Neo Zeon because of his family, and would keeping delving into knowledge every single day, unlike the ambitiuous Hohky. Whether Hohky would accept this command or not, the fleet would disperse immediately, and the “Bifrest” will lead the two other Chivvay-class ships in training. The “Gulltoppr” and the “ Dromi” would then take individual action, and what they were about to face would be a sea of real battle, where a single mistake would cost them their lives. Gilligan inhaled through his nose and suppressed the burning sensation in his heart and stepped off the floor. He saw the window show his reflection before he locked, and the uniform of the Republic army he had been used to suddenly felt revolting.

This collared uniform was designed in the same fashion as the Federation army, only that its colors were of Zeon colors, thick green colors, a uniform that felt annoying to him. The old

Principality's uniform that was full of Zeon flair in the past was removed, and the current Republic only had soldiers with this getup. This felt so cheap compared to the "Sleeves" that emphasized so much on their dress code—the elegant Neo Zeon uniform. This current uniform he was wearing was rid of the Principality's flair; they hoped to start afresh, but after 16 years, nothing started. In the name of revival, they accepted one-sided peace treaties, killed off their souls, wore these uniforms, and was so pitiful that they had no honor and pride left.

If this was the proper way of being a Republic's soldier, there would be no value in walking down this path. Deviating slightly from this path would allow them to live like real warriors. Gilligan crossed through the bridge, and descend from the hatch on the floor down to the deck below. The side of Captain Hohky's face showed no signs of looking back at him, and overlapped with the face of Gilligan's father, an advocate of anti-war, which made him even unhappier.

Part 4

The Republic's army was not allowed to move outside side 3, their own country's territory, but there were exceptions. Such exceptions included offshore space navigation. The training ships that came along were used to ferry new recruits, and the 2 weeks trip around the Earth Celestial sphere was the best chance for the guards fleet ships to get familiar with the technology. There were 4 such trainings each year, and this would be the 45th offshore trip ever since the Republic was created. Thus, the group called the 45th training fleet left from the port of their native area, got the top

secret classified report from the “Wind’s Assembly” as they were about to pass by between Earth and the Moon, 2 days after they left.

It was not a coincidence that the two escort Chivvay-class ships and the 3 Musai-Kai class ships, “Bifrest”, “Gulltoppr” and “Dromi ” had members of the “Wind’s Assembly on them”. This organization was said to have thousands, or even ten thousand members, and they were gathered on specific ships; their main priority would be to defend the fleet during its offshore training. The directive of the chairman was that they needed to learn skills for surfing through the space regions far away, to see the expansive world, but if there was a need, they could act on their own as a battalion.

Just as I wanted, Gilligan thought. The headquarters of the “ Wind’s Assembly” was commanded to search for the “Mock Wooden Horse”—Londo Bell’s “Nahel Argama”. There was no specific reason, but if this was a joint operation with the “Sleeves”, it would definitely have something to do with the mysterious events happening the past month. This ‘just in case’ situation had finally arrived; no matter what it was, the premonition that something big was going to happen strongly drove the enthusiasm of Gilligan and the young members.

After the War, the Principality was subjected to release and execute all the important officials involved with the Zabi family, and they were practically focused to put their foreheads on the ground to beg the Federation for forgiveness. This however was not enough, and the history that followed was etched deeply into his heart, how they offered an entire city to the hungry Federation

army, allowing them to go on a wanton rampage defiling women and children, turning him into a member of the Republic's army. The authority that protected the nation by doing this was this hollow, and the Republic army under the control of the Federation had no authority at all. The Republic army was an army that was suddenly created by the Federation, who once wanted the Republic to disarm themselves, and now, the Federation intended to use them to suppress the Zeon remnants. Their defense directive to open fire before they were attacked hinted that these people were to endure a minimum amount of sacrifice. Even so, the nation never showed signs of regret sacrificing people after the war. The existence of the military itself was against the constitution, and this hint still remained deeply rooted in the Republic government calling itself a peaceful nation.

By deeming an independent war as a crime and abandoning the constitution by deeming it a war without any approval, this ended up bringing about emptiness to the country itself. The Republic soldiers were deemed as petty thieves, and it was a taboo of them to even wear their uniforms and walk down the streets in their country. *Those who can endure such a situation aren't worthy of being called warriors. If we're children who don't know about war, the adults are the ones who created this situation where they forget about their pride . They said that they willing become the puppets of the Federation by having a hundred year nation rebuilding plan, but accepted the return of self-autonomy in the year UC 0100 so easily, and said that returning their autonomy was due to the times. The adults kept delaying the issues, and their decisions could only cause adults to make the wrong step, ridding the people of its future.*

This was what the "Wind's Assembly" told them. The sponsr behind this organization, Defense Minister Monaghan Baharov turned the issues these youth had since young into words. While studying at the National Defense College, Gilligan took part in in an essay competition, was selected, got involved with the "Wind's Assembly", and his meeting with Monaghan became everything in his life.

Monaghan would act as a puppet politician for the Federation, but secretly described the new world order of his ideals, and told Gilligan that the "Wind's Assembly" was to be the forefront. That amazingly extraordinary thinking made Gilligan want to start up for him. While the "Sleeves" led by the Second Coming of Char continued to act as Zeon's ghost, Monaghan and his men would continue to hide in the Republic's army until that day arrived. This thinking brought meaning to his training and endurance that was never repaid; he got some self-respect he could take solace in, and started studying inside the departments seriously.

Those who sacrifice their time as ordinary youths are to train themselves to be soldiers, ready to defend the country, so that they can get the mission to correct the country. Gilligan repeated Monaghan's words in his heart again, affirmed that this moment had come, and let his feet move from the bridge and turn to the mobile suit deck. The Musai Kai-class cruiser had an appearance of an old flatiron, and the mobile suit deck was located right at the bottom of the bridge, at the back of the ship that was the handle. The deck space was a narrow and long cylinder, they could only put the machines on the ceiling and the floor. There were 4 units of RMS-106 " Hizack" that belonged to the Gulltoppr fleet, and two of them were facing each other.

The “HiZack” was developed from the “Zaku” of the old Principality, the ancestor of all mobile suits, and it was developed as a second generation machine, widely known for being adopted for use by the Federation after the War. At this point, it was considered an old mobile suit of the same line as the “Zaku”, and was even sold as toy machines to civilians, but the Republic continued to use this as its main force. The Federation, which upgraded its equipment, left a large remainder to the Republic; they were in a state where they were still fresh from the factories, and it was a hint that they had to repaint these mobile suits with Zeon colors again.

In the end, the mobile suits lying on the deck were white “ Hizacks” that were not practical for actual combat, but the monoeyed heads were still a symbolism of Zeonism, showing a ferocity the GM-types never had. It was never overly stated, but the reason why the Federation kept scrapping the production of the monoeyed type and even swapped out some for the goggle-type was because they wanted to break away from the Zeon designs. Gilligan thought as he lifted his head to look at his customer “Hizack”. “What’s the matter, leader?” he heard this voice, looked behind, and saw the pilots and mechanics of the Gultoppr moving through the zero gravity deck as they gathered at him.

“What’s the content of the received code?” “Are we going to sortie?” The subordinates asking this were showing flushed faces. Gilligan looked around at all these people who too endured the subjugation and were about to be the basis for the new Zeon Principality, and answered them with a smile. A whistle rang, and

someone yelled, “DAMN, WE’VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS!” a celebratory atmosphere soon devoured everyone, and Gilligan raised his hand to stop everyone,

“Our ship will track down and observe the “Mock Wooden Horse”. We just need to hang on until the main forces of the “ Sleeves” arrive, but the mobile suit squadron can launch in this situation. Don’t neglect your preparations; our “Wind’s Assembly” is assigned to this offshore mission for this purpose. There’re still 4 years till the time we have to return our autonomy, and we have to become a wind to strengthen the fervor of the people, to save the forgotten Zeon zeal and our country that’s on the brink of collapse. ”

Gilligan’s body floated in zero gravity, and everyone inadvertently bought their heels together. However, the tense looks on the subordinates’ faces showed that they understood their roles as the vanguards. He looked around at everyone again, and said and smiled, “If we want to ride the wind and fly, we need wings.” He took out a mantle that was folded neatly from inside his clutches, and opened it in front of the surprised group.

The black cloth had a golden rank sewn on it, mimicking the appearance of a wing. This was the mantle used by the cadres of the old Principality. The crowd let out oohs as they widened their eyes, “It’s the 3rd battle outfit!” “The real thing?” voices rang, and Gilligan answered, “There’s one for everyone.” He put on the Lieutenant’s mantle and hung the wing-shaped crest in front of his chest. “In the future, all officers are to wear the mantle, and the soldiers are to change into the prepared 3rd uniform. This is the will of the chairman.”

The mechanic answered to the keyword as he moved the cardboard box of mantles here. This was something the leader of the “Wind’s Assembly” prepared ‘just in case’. Gilligan looked on at the cheering subordinates who came fighting for the clothing like bait, and showed a wry smile as he looked at his machine pleased at the ceiling. The RMS-106CS “Hizack Custom” legs were larger, giving it a more stable impression than an ordinary “Hizack ”. From this place, he could see the blade antenna of a commander at the top, and could see himself being reflected off the visor protecting the monoeye.

He looked up at the direct descendent of the “Zaku” series as he put on the mantle that reached his waist. If possible, he hoped to have a Principality’s peaked cap, but he could not ask for too much . This was the real him, the pride he finally could get after living for 28 years—the intoxication of arrogance numbed his body as he clenched the fist placed on his chest.

Part 5

The gate to the deck was opened, and the sounds of the reports and alarms that rang through the machine vanished as the only thing that could be heard was the sound of the generator. Angelo let his body submerge in the silence of space as his fingers rest on the ball grip, and lifted his stare to look at the pitch darkness on the other side of the gate. (Path is clear. Frontal squadron, please launch.) The report from the bridge rang.

(Captain, there's a response from Tenisun's fleet hiding in Side 6. They can catch up to the "Mock Wooden Horse" in one or two days. There's no need to make a move first, is there?)

After the operator's voice rang, Ship captain Hill's voice echoed in the helmet. It had been 30 minutes since they received the information from the Republic earlier than expected, and decided to send the mobile suit squad for attack. Ship captain Hill had been advising against this operation all this time, and even at this point, but in fact, he was worried that there might be some mishap that may happen to Frontal. *It's cute that you're worried to this extent.* Angelo noted wryly. (Something might happen during this 1, 2 days.) Frontal said with a wry tone.

(The fleet commander of Londo Bell, Bright is supporting the " Mock Wooden Horse". If he's the one giving the commands, he probably has a plan to secure the "Box". In this phase, a day's difference is a lot.)

(Is that so…)

(This might be a showdown. I'll end things before the " Rewloola" reaches.)

Frontal cut off the communication line on his side, and the " Sinanju" lined its feet on the catapult. The red machine with a beam rifle, shield and bazooka on its waist leaned forward. (Full Frontal, "Sinanju", launching.) The nonchalant voice rang, and the tremor of the catapult being activated shook the deck; the machine with the wing-like thruster unit shot out of the hatch, and the "

Sinanju" disappeared from the mobile suit deck. Angelo stepped on the pedal, and let the "Rozen Zulu" move forward without waiting for the catapult to return back to its original position.

The feet of the "Rozen Zulu" had the unique shape of high heeled shoes, and it could not fit onto the catapult either way. Angelo let the machine lean towards the gate nearby, and glanced at the deck crew waving the conducting bar, before looking at the wide space in front of the deck. *This might be a showdown*—he repeated Frontal's words in his heart, and exerted strength into his stomach.

"Angelo Sauper, "Rozen Zulu", launching!"

The thrusters installed on the shoulders and waist armor let out flares, and the purple machine, which was designed based on a rose, was surrounded by light. The catapult deck that reached the bow of the ship immediately slid by from below, and the "Rozen Zulu" danced in the void. With the red "Rewloola" behind, he pursued the "Sinanju" that was moving far in front. The latter did not activate the main thrusters on its back, but used two, three restrained burst to negate the inertia, and fluidly approached the 4 shackles on standby.

The shackles were a SFS similar to the "Clogs" used by the Federation, and it was used for mobile suits long distance travel. Right now, it had two large booster rockets, and the tips of the 50m long rods were attached to the oval machines. Angelo interrupted his momentum and let the "Rozen Zulu" land on the second unit. Once the machine knelt down and landed on the platform, the hook-shaped finger grips latched on. At this moment, two "Geara

Zulus" of the escort squad launched from the "Rewloola", and landed on the 3rd and 4th shackle units.

The newly sortied Second Lieutenant Rakker and Ensign Reiru were here to replace Sergi and Cuarón who died in battle. They had exceptional skills as pilot, but could their "Geara Zulu" catch up to the capabilities of this "Rozen Zulu". As Angelo thought about this, (Angelo), Frontal's voice suddenly rang, and Angelo hurriedly looked at the first shackle.

(What I told Ship captain Hill was true. We'll settle everything regarding the "Laplace Box" this time.)

"Right…!"

(The pilot of the "Unicorn Gundam" is gradually awakening into a powerful Newtype. When there's a battle, I'll have to rely on your "Rozen Zulu". Be prepared.)

These unexpected words caused him to be short of breath. In the past, Frontal had never said anything about being prepared. He always fought for himself, and this Captain, who never required any assistance, was actually asking Angelo for help. He fully showed the fear in him, his true feelings to Angelo.

Banagher Links has become a really powerful opponent. Angelo felt a chill pass through, but a more intense emotion rose from deep within him. "Yes!" he answered and sat upright in the cockpit. Just when he was feeling anxious about being unable to be more affectionate, (All units, correct your course. 10 seconds till the boosters light up.) the voice of the Shackle pilot rang, 9, 8, 7…the

countdown through the wireless. After seeing the "Sinanju" ride on Shackle unit 1 as it flapped the wings on back, Angelo closed his eyes and let the body ride on the momentum of the boosters.

The spotless, pure white fabric appeared in his eyes. The white blanket appeared deep within his memories. Angelo was once stained by blood, dung and urine, but this blanket was purified by Frontal's 'power'. He pursued Frontal, believed in him, and viewed the latter as part of him for 3 years, which negated the corruption that had stained him for the past 10 years or so. He did not have any regrets left, and he was already mentally prepared. The grace of being saved could only be repaid by saving him back.

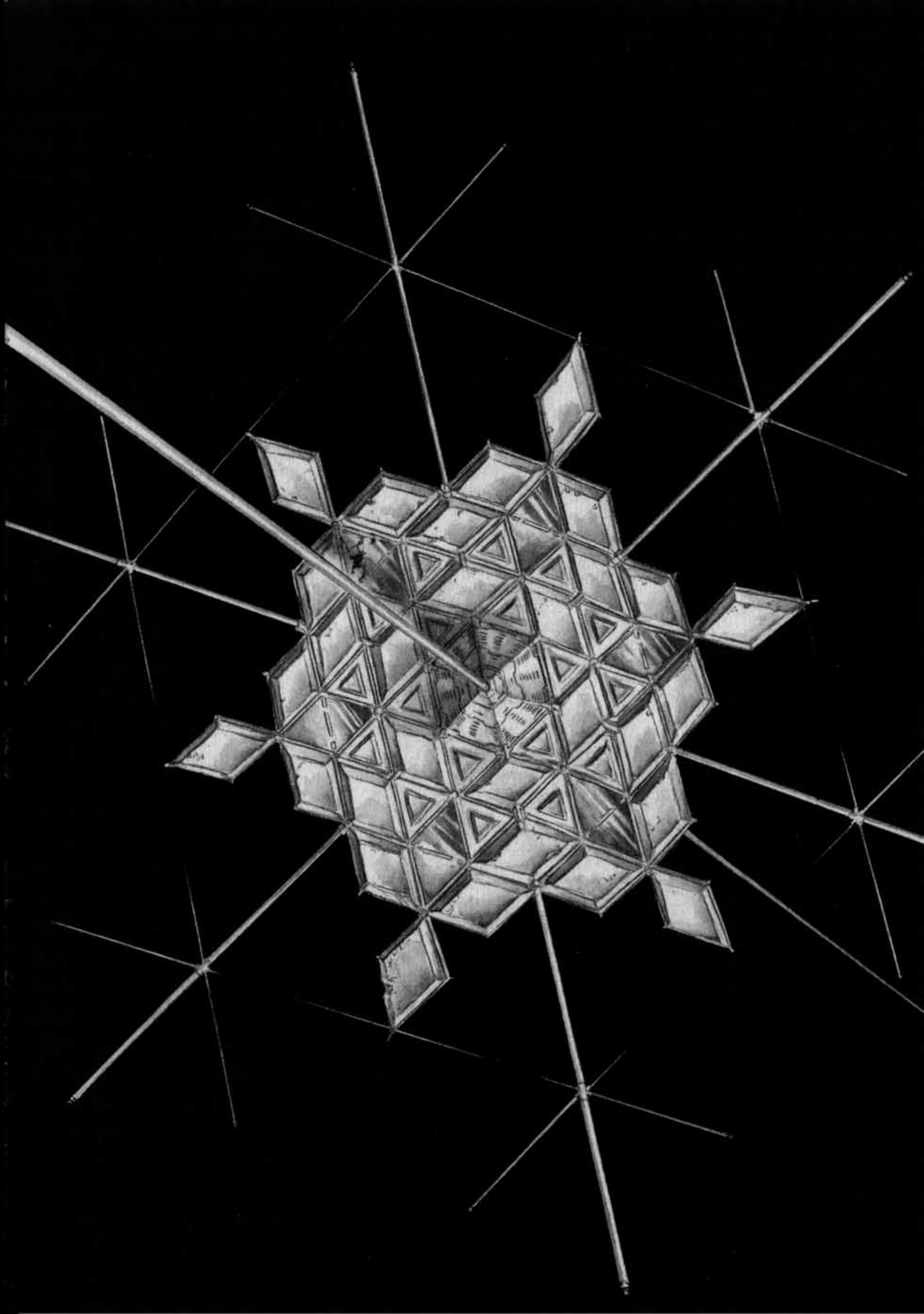
"If it's for you, wherever you go—"

The flash and the buzzing of the boosters erased the following words. The 4 Shackles fired forward like bullets as they drag long and thick trails of light. Angelo endured the G-Force rattling on him, and looked at the space through his narrowed eyes. The Shackle ferrying the "Sinanju" let out a tremendous light on rockets, ostensibly devouring the surrounding stars.

Part 6

The central core module had thickness, but the panels of the solar generator expanded around it were just a thin layer, and when viewed from afar, it looked like a sheet of glass giving off white light. The panel was made of numerous triangular and rhombuses, creating a tessellation that was almost the shape of a hexagon; there were 6 warning lights flashing, reaching out from all corners. The "L1 junction" felt like…or rather, it was designed

in the form of a snowflake; its shape was no longer that of a lighthouse, but something similar to an art piece. Including the pillars of the warning lights, the maximum diameter was 2km, and it could be said to be the most expansive art piece humanity used its public expenses for.



There were 5 Lagrange Points formed between the Earth and the Moon, and each Lagrange Point had such a landmark set. This could be said to be the first stronghold of humanity in space beside the first space station sent into Earth's orbit. Before the Universal Century began, humanity used these light towers to ascertain their positions, and crossed through this wide and endless space. In space, where every item would float away, and even the colonies relative positions continued to change, it was an artificial item that had an absolute position compared to the Earth and the Moon. The light and electrowaves released from it were the materials that allowed people to proceed with their work without worry—until the discovery of Minovsky Particles that thoroughly overturned the reliability of electricity.

Because of the advancement in space navigation technology, there were no ships that would use light towers as landmarks. Its existence had long been wasted; the light tower at L5 was wrecked in the war, and it was said that it was never rebuilt. The 'L1 Junction' flickering in front of their eyes had only an occasional patrol from the space colony association, and the people situated there had long evacuated. They set up an empty temporary pier to allow any ships that were involved in accidents to dock, but they probably could not use it in this situation. It let out a beautiful glow, but one could see that the 'L1 Junction' shown on the expanded main screen was completely desolate. "Another junk…" Liam muttered with a sigh as she witnessed the same thing.

"Is this Cardeas Vist's interest? Whether it's the relic of " Laplace" or here."

"Places with hidden treasures are typically the ones most likely to be forgotten."

In stories. Otto added in his heart as he gave a wry smile. Liam glanced at him, and argued back wordlessly that it was reality. He understood, but it could not be helped. The current reality was that the coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program was directed at this 'L1 Junction'. Otto again looked at the space tower that was almost 5,000km away. Even though its parts showed signs of erosion after many years of being placed here, but the construct that symbolized a snowflake did not change its impression as a huge art piece. This impression made it look like it was very suitable for hiding treasure, but was also mystifying to a point where it could not be described.

The remnant of the Prime Minister's Residence "Laplace", the capital Dakar, and now the 3rd location; were things going to end after 3 times, or—*Otto ceased all useless thoughts and looked at the sensor on his left. "Are there any ships around us?" he asked this question for the umpteenth time. "Just like 10 minutes ago." The sensor operator answered rhythmically.*

"There's a trading ship moving on the same path within a radius of 5,000km, and there's a cruiser and a shuttle going in the opposite way."

"Even if there's a civilian signal released, don't get careless. We were had on "Laplace" because of this. Don't look away from the ship you set sight on."

"Understood." Upon hearing this reply, Otto looked back at the main screen. "Even though the enemy back then is our ally now." Otto muttered to himself, and felt Liam give him a meaningful look. "Captain…" she muttered. "I know." But Otto interrupted what she wanted to say next.

"I received a report from the supervisors. I'm very concerned that they're too comfy, but there's no actual proof, so we can only hold our horses here."

He was talking about Zinnerman and the rest of the " Garencieres" team. They were not intending to interact enthusiastically, but seemed content with taking a step back and observing. They were definitely unable to hide their doubts about how things were developing, and had a natural reaction. It seemed that they did not have any motives at this point, but it was a fact that the Neo Zeon soldiers that totaled to more than 30 were not restrained, and were allowed to move freely in the ship. "Is that so …" Liam's voice had some doubt it it.

"Whether it's good or fact, the fact is that we let things develop like this. I don't want to detain them at this moment and revert everything back to how it was. Let's bet on those two."

Otto look past Ensign Mihiro, who was at the communication console, and looked at the ship monitor showing the mobile suit deck as he said that in a voice only Liam could hear. The Zeonic-styled "Geara Zulu" and the ReZEL with the Federation goggles were lined together; they did not feel like they matched no matter how they looked. There was a 94-type Base Jabber at the

factory block in the middle of the deck, and two "Lotos" in tank-form that were fastened down on the platform along it. The ECOAS members and the mechanics on the ships were working on fastening it down, and the white machine frame of the "Unicorn" stood behind them silently as Banagher and Mineva stood on the gondola built beside the cockpit. They were both in pilot suits, and were about to head into the cockpit of the "Unicorn".

Conroy and Zinnerman were both standing on the same gondola, their arms folded as they looked at the pair. Banagher wanted to let Mineva come along with him as he head out to the ' L1 Junction' for investigations, and his insistence was that since Mineva had already abandoned Neo Zeon and rode on this ship, she should have the privilege to go along. The adults nodding away however had their own ideas; the ECOAS and Garencieres team were not looking at each other on the monitor as they flanked the pair, signifying the hideous atmosphere on the "Nahel Argama " at this point.

People are beings who got reconciliation through countless trials…let' s hope this is one of them.

Otto muttered what Bright said. "All inspectors, no change in the launching plans. Take note of the final destination." Mihiro's voice of a seasoned operator rang, causing the vague atmosphere in the bridge to become a little tense.

Part 7

"…That's why, since it's designed for Newtype-use, this guy's thrust power is not just for smooth maneuverability. It will be a little heavier, but your skills will make up for it."

Takuya said as he showed the 3 sided printout. He was dressed in overalls with the logo of the Nahel Argama on it, saying some ostensibly complicated thing, and looked just like a real mechanic. There was nowhere else to run on the gondola, and Banagher retreated to the cockpit hatch at the side. "Talking about my skills? You haven't seen them at all." He pouted as he said. "But I did read through the battle logs." Takuya however argued back, not wanting to lose.

"I've read the logs about battles like the ones against the Red Comet or the aerial battle against Unit 02. Your testimony can't be used for reference since you're so immature, but this educational computer of the "Unicorn" has a complete log about it. I've researched through it and thought of this enhancement here. It's called the "Full Armor Unicorn"!"

The blueprint flashed in front of Banagher's eyes again had an outline of the "Unicorn" with lots of portable weapons on it. Banagher did think of how to handle the heavier machine and increase the output accordingly, but the blueprint simply looked like a child's doodling, and only felt like they were loaded with powerful machines. He glanced aside at Audrey, who looked ready to burst into laughter, and then turned to look at the mechanic officer Gibney above the cockpit cover. "Mr Gibney, this

apprentice mechanic wants to modify the "Unicorn" on his own will!" In response, Gibney merely shook his muscular back as he let out laughter.

"I've seen it too, and it's actually quite balanced. How about you try it out as a friend?"

"Don't joke around."

"Eh, please. I'll only use what we have, and it'll be over after 20 minutes in the construction block, alright?"

Takuya however won't take part this blueprint. "No way." Banagher pushes it back.

"And I'm not going out for battle this time. My hands will be full because of this plan, right? It'll be hard to carry out the investigation."

"That's why we need to rely on your skills."

He smiled and patted on Banagher's shoulder, his expression causing the latter to sigh. "Seriously you…" As Banagher placed his hands on his waist, another voice came, "Hold it, Takuya! Restrain yourself there!" This voice caused Banagher and Takuya to look back in unison."

"Didn't we agree not to interfere with what Banagher does yesterday?"

Micott said as she held the dinner boxes in her hands, balancing herself. It seemed that she sensed this commotion when the food

was given out. *So it's already this time?* Banagher looked at the watch hidden inside the glove, "But I'm not getting in his way." and Takuya argued back with a vague voice.

"I'm doing this for Banagher's sake…"

"Why aren't you looking at me in the eyes…is Mr. Gibney being too nice to you? To think that he allows an apprentice to design a blueprint."

"Is that so?" Gibney chuckled as he grabbed the dinner box that was thrown to him. Banagher looked at Takuya and Micott, who had already involved themselves into the atmosphere of the bridge well, and again felt that they were in a different realm on their own…a complicated sense of comfort and loneliness rose in his heart. "There's no need for this since Banagher's going to move now, right?" Micott asked. "Yeah, um. I ate already." Banagher answered, but a sense of melancholy caused him to look away.

"…You too, Miss Audrey?"

Micott stare turned behind Banagher, ostensibly not realizing it herself. Audrey seemed to be stumbling in her words, "Oh, thank you." but did not look unnatural, and Micott smiled back, not showing any signs of malice on her face. "Do your best!" Micott winked as she left the scene, while Takuya kept his blueprint and left the cockpit together with her. Banagher suddenly felt abandoned and scratched his nose that was not feeling itchy.

"Such great friends."

Audrey said as she watched them leave. “Is that so?” Banagher turned his head around with a wry look, and accidentally spotted her dressed in a Federation pilot suit. A pilot suit demands more ease of maneuverability, and this pilot suit showed the figure of the wearer. Banagher kept staring at her, and realized that her body figure was unexpectedly nice. “I’m envious.” Audrey said as she approached him.

“I did not have any friends I could talk with like this.”

She whispered, and returned to her original position before he could see her face. She did not mind too much about Banagher, who did not react in time, and floated towards the “Geara Zulu” docked by the side, ostensibly want to talk about something with Zinnerman over there. Zinnerman, who interrupted his conversation on the unit’s information with the ship’s mechanic, turned to Audrey, and would turn an occasional glance at Banagher. For some reason, Banagher felt a sense of guilt as he did not look back, and hid inside the cockpit.

He checked that the assistance seat was pulled out for Audrey to sit on, and sat down on the linear seat. “But I’m here.” The words he failed to convey to Audrey in time repeated in his heart. *No, it’s different from being an ordinary friend. I don’t want to end things just by being ordinary friends…as he started thinking about this, the light shining in through the hatch suddenly dulled. Banagher lifted his head to see Conroy’s hulking figure standing outside the hatch.*

Conroy did not let out any voices as he agilely poked his head into the cockpit unbefitting of his large frame, and approached with a stern expression. At the same time, he brought something in

his clutches to Banagher, causing the latter to hear his heart jump loudly.

"…What?"

His stare was attracted by the automatic handgun with a black glow, and he then turned his face to Conroy. "Take this just in case ." Conroy whispered and handed it together with the holster.

"Just in case…"

"We ECOAS will be heading forth to investigate, and the defenses on the "Nahel Argama" will weaken. If anything happens , you're the only one who can stop them."

Conroy said each word slowly and carefully as he looked at the hangar at the side of the all-view monitor. Banagher understood that there was the "Geara Zulu", Zinnerman and company, and suddenly felt his eyesight darken.

"You want me to use Audrey as a hostage?"

There was a wordless reply. "But this…!" Banagher suddenly interrupted violently, "Just in case." But Conroy interrupted him with a firm voice.

"Lieutenant Zinnerman understands very well. Same goes for Captain Otto. If not, Princess Mineva won't be coming along to investigate."

This was completely beyond what Banagher imagine. He thought that the reason why they allowed Audrey to come along

and investigate the “Box” was because she had the right to, but he did not think that this was to take a hostage to seal the actions of the Garencieres, or whether Zinnerman understood this—Banagher did not feel as betrayed as he was embarrassed by how he did not realize this, and lowered his head wordlessly. “Just treat it as a rule.” Conroy’s voice echoed blankly in this ball-shaped cockpit.

“It’ll take stages before adults can trust each other fully. No fool will give a large sum of money they don’t know of unless there’s a guarantor.”

“This sort of thing…”

“I understand how you feel. I want to see things like a Newtype too, but—”

Conroy suddenly stopped what he was saying midway through , and his body froze for a moment as he looked behind. Banagher too lifted his head, looked over Conroy’s shoulders, and exchanged looks with the figure standing behind. Audrey looked somewhat surprised as she moved her face away from the hatch, “ Sorry for interrupting your conversation.” and wanted to leave. “ No, it’s fine.” Conroy however answered as he gave a different composed look at Audrey, stuffing the handgun into Banagher’s hands.

“You’ve finished all you wanted to say, right?”

His face was smiling, but the smile could not hide the murderous intent in his expression. Banagher grabbed the gun and

stuffed it in the gap between the back and the linear seat. Just like this, Conroy left the cockpit; he looked in from through the hatch, and turned away, wanting to move away. “Lieutenant Commander Conroy.” Audrey, who was standing at the hatch, called to the person that was about to leave.

“Have you heard of the term lingering thoughts?”

Conroy’s body froze for a moment, “Lingering…thoughts?” and asked back as his eyes blinked for no apparent reason. Audrey took a step towards him.

“Mr. Aaron said that if the Psycommu has the strength to gather people’s wills, it can work beyond the boundaries of life and death . In other words, the wills of humans that are not certain to be dead have the possibility of being used by the “Unicorn”.”

Conroy must have felt that these words were beyond his expectations. “Of course, these are baseless hypotheses.” Audrey however smiled as she continued.

“But if you think of it this way, you can understand why the “ Unicorn” can increase in power at such an abnormal rate. This machine absorbs the lives of those related to it, and bind us together. Banagher’s father, the Neo Zeon soldiers, and definitely, the man who sacrificed his life to protect Banagher, Commander Daguza Mackle’s soul,…”

She said this as she looked up at the lone horn of the “Unicorn”. Banagher looked at the side of her face. Her expression showed that ths ewas already aware of the thoughts the adults around

them had, but even so, she never showed despair; she must not show despair, and act as the role people expected her to be. Conroy's stunned expression recovered somewhat as he brought his feet together, showing respect in his eyes. To a soldier like him, words that respect his dead commander would be the greatest compliment to him. Banagher felt the warmth of humans in this unknown machine called the "Unicorn", and felt an inkling of redemption. He looked at Audrey sidelong, and though she was smiling, her expression was somewhat dull as she watched Conroy leave, causing Banagher to recall the gloom she had for the past few days.

The occasion gloom she showed was not just she was fatigued about the role she had to play. He called her to join him while wanting to know the truth behind it, but did not expect things to end up like this—he closed his eyes and bit his lips, deciding that he must not let her discover the handgun as that hard foreign rested on his back.

Part 8

It was a large ship beyond common sense, but the mobile suit deck of the "General Revil" was not so wide that it was jaw-dropping. Whether it was the high of 7 levels, or the size that allowed it to contain a dozen mobile suits, it was still about the same size as the "Nahel Argama" deck. This could even be considered smaller than the one on the "Ra Cailum", but the decisive difference this ship had compared to the rest was that it had 4 of such mobile suit decks.

4 platoons, 48 mobile suits were docked in their respective decks, and each platoon had their own territories, ranging from the resupply deliveries to their daily lives. This 3rd deck was the territory of the Clifford platoon, and the 12 Jegan-types were kept in the deck, 6 machines on both sides on the deck facing each other , but Riddhe did not recognize the faces and names of their pilots.

Dressed in the black pilot suit, he deliberately isolated himself because of his falsified history; there was no reason for him to get along with the pilots on the same deck, and nobody in particular was willing to go all the way out just to talk to him. He experienced this atmosphere on the "Ra Cailum" before, but the anxiety and sense of isolation he felt on this ship was far beyond the days he spent on Earth, making the latter a piece of cake. His body was tired from the training, and he leaned on the railing of the catwalk as he looked at the one existence that had any relation to him at this point. The black machine "Banshee" stood at the hangar, and the lone golden horn was the only thing reflecting light as it stood at a corner of the deck as it remained as a non-regiment unit in the corner of the deck.

"The horn can be viewed as a highly powerful and polar radar that can detect the enemy's Psycowaves. Once the machine detects the existence of a Psycommu machine, the horn will split apart to form blade antennas to become a highly mobile state used for combat…the Destroy mode. The one controlling its activation here is the NT-D, and this is a common specification for the Unicorn-type, but the system for Unit 01 was obviously activated. This is probably caused by the Laplace Program Cardeas installed. Looking at the current records, the "Unicorn" NT-D will scan not only the outside, but also the pilot inside. Once it senses the

Psycowaves of the pilot instead, it will activate its Gundam-system. In this sense, it isn't the original Newtype destroyer, but a subform of what we should call the Newtype-Drive system."

Alberto's voice from before echoed, and Riddhe's fatigued head started to ache. He grabbed onto the handrail tightly, and stared at the black machine he still could not pilot.

The Psycommu system's agility increases drastically with the co-activation of the Psycoframe. In the past, the Psycommu transfers the thought waves into digital data and handles them, but the Unicorn-type Psycoframes can receive the Psycowaves of the pilot even under vague situations. Simply put, it can receive the Psycowaves before the pilot thinks or says out…even the murmuring of the pilot, and react according. Due to the extremely intrinsic calculations of the system, the Unicorn-type can even interfere with the enemy's Psycommus and control weapons like funnels. However, the problem is that the massive calculations will be a burden to the pilot's head. You have heard of the corrosion effect when the Psycommu system is in place. A Cyber-Newtype can forcefully clear out a part of their brain as an empty area, and in theory, it is possible to have a man-machine interface, but an ordinary person can't do this. The Psycowaves amplified by the Psycommu will form a tremendous pressure on the pilot once it flows back into the head. The antagonistic intent and fear will expand to a point where it can't be handled and would affect the pilot's mental state…a strong fear will control the pilot, and sometimes, even cause the system to malfunction."

The downside to controlling a machine that could be controlled like the pilot's limbs was that the pilot had to endure the stress on

the machine. Thus, Cyber-Newtypes would deliberately leave openings in their mental state…this was what Alberto was going, that humans were too complicated that they could not be synchronized with the machine. It would be better to keep the instincts that would trigger the sixth sense, and remove all other aspects of the soul. This was what the Newtype Research Facility concluded.

Of course, this was a bone-chilling topic. The researchers who would make such a conclusion, the technicians who created the system were both traitors to humanity; but though Riddhe agreed with the notion that they were traitors, it did not matter to him as he wanted that power. it had been 3 days since he started training to familiarize himself, but the "Banshee" still would not get in sync with him. Despite managing to activate the NT-D in the mock simulations, he could not trigger the expected mobility, and even till this point, he did not experience this high mobility that was like instantaneous movement. This may be a machine built for Cyber-Newtypes, but he could not use that as an excuse. In fact, Banagher activated the NT-D in his first battle and piloted the " Unicorn Gundam".

According to Alberto, Banagher was swallowed by the system several times in the beginning, and nearly lost control of himself. However, he had learnt how to control the system completely. Riddhe would experience this power of the controlled "Unicorn" the moment he clash with Banagher directly. *How did that boy, who never hid his feelings, get such a power? How do I beat him? Do I need a strong will that can control the system and a firm heat? The source of his vigor, that thing shining from deep within the eyes is—*

"You're too tense."

At that instant, a familiar voice rang in his ears, causing Riddhe to freeze. He knew who the voice belonged to, took a breath to get ready, and turned his breath.

"Your soul and body are too tense. It's rare to see someone with impressive abilities like yours, but this is really a waste."

Nigel said the exact same thing he said before as he approached on the narrow catwalk. Riddhe had thought the Tri-stars were in another deck, and did not worry that they would meet, but it was too late to ignore Nigel at this distance as he brought his feet together. Nigel scanned all over Riddhe from head to toe, stopped at the Vist Foundaiton logo on the pilot suit chest, "So you're the pilot of the second unit?" and smiled as he said this.

"The man who should be receiving direct orders from the Senate Council is now the personal pilot of the Vist Foundation… that's quite a vagrant life you have there, Ensign Riddhe."

"Is there anything, Lieutenant Nigel?"

"it's nothing, just that we meet on the same ship. It's okay to come over and greet, is it not?"

The inscrutable smile and the inexplicable stare were looking back at Riddhe's face, no different from how it was on the "Ra Cailum". Riddhe was reminded of the time he was shamed on Earth as he faced that stare, and looked away, trying to find some place he could look at on the deck below. However, Nigel did not

seem to mind as he walked towards Riddhe, and his hulking figure in the grey officer uniform rest on the handrail.

"Looks like you're not enhanced yet."

Nigel's probing stare looked as though it could see through Riddhe's faltering heart as he said with a doubtfully teasing voice, causing the latter's fists to tremble.

"That transport ship "Garencieres" was a decoy; we bit on it, and our mothership was sunk by the Red Comet". Including our allied machines, more than 400 people were turned into space dust . If the higher-ups had revealed all the all the information, the outcome would be different."

The end of those words was filled with cold spite. Riddhe turned his stare to the side of Nigel's face.

"But it can't be helped. Pilots can only do the best of what they could in such situations. I thought that you're the same as us even though you're commanded by the Senate Council directly, but it looks like I'm wrong."

"…What does that mean?"

"I'm asking if you've lost sight of your current role as a pilot now. You became a pawn of the Foundation just to make up for some things you lack. A pilot with a normal brain will never think of riding such a monstrous machine. Even if you want to work with this ship, you should be here in the "Delta Plus"."

Nigel looked down at the “Banshee” that was surrounded by the personnel related to the Foundaiton. Riddhe increased the strength on his grip.

“It’s the same thing when you think that you can’t beat the “ Unicorn” without this. It’s not a pilot’s way of thinking to think that you can give up your heart just to win. I feel that I’m getting hot-headed over a paranoia-ridden brat now, no?”

“Even if you say that’s the case, so what?”

Riddhe felt the sharp pain hitting his chest, and his sense of rationality that was restraining himself not to answer was forgotten. Nigel however did not let Riddhe escape from his accidental slip of tongue, “This really annoys me.” He said with a forceful tone.

“I didn’t think I have such a guy in the same squad.”

“Just shoot me in the back if you want. I’ve done my best here. Even if our methods are different, there’s no reason for me to hear your grumblings.”

“Is selling your soul to a machine the best method?”

“A pilot isn’t exactly smart enough to care about everything else , right? We’re technically machines if we’re talking about it, machines hired to defeat the enemy, meant to eliminate Zeon—“

“THIS IS JUST AN EXCUSE!”

Nigel roared as he grabbed Riddhe by the shoulders, pulling the latter close. He used the railing to maintain a center of gravity, and in response to Nigel's act, Riddhe floated, unable to resist.

"If there are no choices to choose, you can only use your brain to decide. This is something a pilot can do, and you now lost the ability to make the correct decision. What caused you to become like this? What are you—"

"It's the "Unicorn". I just want to beat it and prevent its secrets from being falling into Neo Zeon hands. Are you terrified of it too, Lieutenant?"

"What…?"

"You're scared of the "Unicorn" too. You wanted to deny that you're scared of it; that's why you chased it into space. I understand your feelings, and it's true that this is not a joke. This Newtype thing that has no basis of belief at all, denying my ability —"

A blunt sound rang, and Riddhe's vision was tilted horizontally . He was hit, and the moment he realized this, he felt his head heat up at that instant as it hit the wall, and he bent his body.

He did not look at the blobs of blood floating in the air as he clenched his fist and kicked the wall. *Everyone's just saying whatever they want, trampling me below. You don't know anything at all, and I'm sick of such criticism.* He ignored the face that Nigel was a superior officer, and was about to swing his fist at the latter's face, "Hold it"

, however, someone called out, and at the next moment, the fist let out a blunt impact that hit the face.

The person who got between them stumbled in front of Nigel, the latter's eyes wide with shock. Alberto placed his hand on the wall and supported his body that was sent flying. "Goodness…" he muttered as he pressed on his redden cheek, shaking his head as he looked over at the dumbstruck Nigel, and then stared back at Riddhe. The latter did not understand what was going on as he blinked his eyes and looked at that thick fact.

"Please don't do such a thing, Lieutenant Nigel. It'll be troublesome if the personal pilot of the Foundation is here."

"…I think I'm the one who nearly got hurt here."

"You're planning to deliberately take the hit from the Ensign, charge him for insubordination, and pull him down from the " Banshee", right?"

Is that so? Riddhe never thought of this before, and Nigel did not look back at the suspecting look as he turned his troubled look aside.

"I understand now. You mean you're mentally prepared already? Ensign Riddhe, Mr. Alberto."

Alberto wiped away the blood that oozed from his mouth and showed that condescending smile from before. Nigel answered with a wry smile that lasted for less than a second, and looked at Riddhe wordlessly before leaving the scene. Once the long

shoulder-length hair disappeared from the area, Alberto heaved a sigh of relief. “Why…” Riddhe clenched his hurting fist as he looked at Alberto’s face sidelong and asked.

“It’s just like what I said. We can’t lose the pilot of the “Banshee ” here.”

Alberto stepped off the floor without turning back. “I don’t want to take this punch for no good reason, so you better calm down.” his figure drifted far away as he said this, and Riddhe felt the pain on his cheeks increasing, and the emotions he had been trying to suppress overwhelmed him, urging him to bawl.

Alberto and Nigel both looked like adults here, while Riddhe, who accumulated the urge he was unable to release, looked pathetic as he continued to sulk alone. Shame and self-loathing exploded in him, “Hold it.” released in a form of words, and he suddenly let loose a line he did not think of a second ago,

“ENHANCE ME!”

Alberto, and even Riddhe himself was stunned. “Are you serious?” the former stopped and turned around to ask, and Riddhe affirmed it as he looked at Alberto in the eyes. *I can’t beat the “Unicorn” in this situation, and I can’t pilot the “Banshee” well. Instead of being embarrassed for being unable to do anything, I might as well*—the words driven by his impulse appeared in his heart as he gave a look showing that he was looking deep into his own heart, but he was stunned by Alberto’s sudden chortle.

"Don't kid around. The enhancement of the mental state will turn the inferiority of the user into antagonistic intent. The you now will only end up on the path to self-destruction."

"I just want to—"

"And if that were so convenient, I would have tried it myself. That is, if drugs and brainwashing alone is enough to enhance the soul."

These unexpected words interrupted Riddhe, and Alberto turned his back on the former. "It's really weird." The self-depreciation voice came out, causing the buzz on the mobile suit deck to disappear in an instant.

"When I was about to die on the "Garuda", I recalled. 'I guess I can leave the future affairs of the Foundation to Banagher'…I certainly heard father say this more than 10 years ago."

Father. This word entered Riddhe's mind, and he recalled the unexpected relationship they had. If Alberto were the heir, the father would be Cardeas Vist, and if the former was the latter's true son, he and Banagher would be—

"Ever since mom died of a heart attack, I was placed in a boarding school. I accidentally heard of these words when I returned home after graduating from university. I knew that father brought his mistress into the house, and that they had a child, but to a young man who had been learning to work in the Foundation, this was a huge shock to me."

Did the relationship with Martha begin before then? Riddhe thought , but realized that this was not important, and looked away from Alberto. No matter what the reason was, this misstep broke the fragile relationship between father and son forever. Riddhe himself would never be able to face his father properly again…

"But I forgot about this in the long run. I thought my hatred of my father was because he used his strong self as a basis, lacked care for the weak, and caused my mother to commit suicide. When I heard the name Banagher Links, I did not think he was anyone related to me until someone mentioned so. I probably sealed my memories unconsciously, just like he did. But my mind and body still remember. Thus, when I knew that father was about to give the "Box" away, I used my hands…"

Alberto stared at the hands raised to his chest and slowly clenched them. Riddhe, who had seen his covert operation on " Industrial 7", was able to guess what Alberto used his hands to do. He felt an icy cold wind blow by, and looked at the back figure that had no one to rely on. "The memories I forgot completely remained rooted deep in my heart, and decided my present fate." Albeto continued as he let his relaxed hand float aimlessly.

"And brainwashing of Cyber-Newtypes is an artificial way to do this, but this will not get us a strong will. Instead of thinking about such useless things, you're better of getting used to the " Banshee". What you and I need most now is the power to control the situation, and this can be obtained by beating the "Unicorn". Make good use of your current position, and I'll make good use of you."

Alberto finished, and his figure kicked the floor as he truly disappeared from Riddhe's eyes this time. The similarly red and swollen face disappeared past the door, and the atmosphere of isolation surrounded the catwalk. The alliance the Federation government and the Vist Foundation had for a hundred years was renewed in this generation, and Riddhe, who could only accept the current changing scenario, let his eyes drift towards the "Banshee" lying in a corner of the deck.

What he needed was the power to control the current situation …he had to take back what was taken from him, and affirm the power he chose. No matter what he chose, Mineva would never return to him, and he understood that well. But he told himself that his personal problems were different from the "Box", and he continued to look at the black machine. As the pilot thought of trekking deeper into the abyss, the "Banshee" merely stared at the opposite wall with its emotionless face.

Part 9

(All hands, this is the Captain. We shall now head to the coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program and investigate the "L1 Junction". All investigation teams are to sortie in order, and all hands are to buck up in the anti-air supervision.)

Captain Otto's voice rang through the open circuit, and the mobile suit deck start to draw out air. Banagher saw the 'AIR' on the display board turn red, (RX-0, please step onto the mobile suit deck. We're awaiting good news from you, Banagher.), and then heard Mihiro's voice. "Roger that." He answered as he stepped on the pedal slightly.

The “Unicorn”, wielding the beam rifle on its right hand and the shield on its backpack, started to move forward as it left the hangar. It let the hooks on the feet sink into the deck indentation, and for every step it trudged forward, a quake-like rumbling reached the cockpit. Banagher sensed that Audrey, who was sitting on the assistance seat beside him, was a little tense, and there was an unnerving weight on the right foot as he pressed down on it, causing him to curl his lips. The automatic handgun Conroy gave him was stuffed in the right ankle holster. *it’s not wrong to say that this is a standard equipment for a pilot, but I wonder if Audrey will mind ?* Banagher wanted to look over at the assistance seat on the right side, but sat Zinnerman and company standing in a corner of the deck, causing him to be unable to breath.

The man dressed in civilian normal suits brought in from the “ Garencieres” was looking back at him from the catwalk with his black eyes—an insuppressible urge suddenly rose in Banagher, and he stopped the machine at the elevator leading to the deck. “ Banagher?” Audrey called out, “I’ll be back.” but Banagher answered, opened the hatch, and leapt out of the cockpit.

“Captain!”

The air inside the hatch was sucked outside, and Banagher yelled out as he floated towards the catwalk. They were in the middle of moving out, and the noises were mixed around in the air . Even if Banagher called out loud, Zinnerman might not be able to hear him, but Banagher still did so, and the latter heard it. Zinnerman showed an ostensibly shocked expression for a moment, before backtracking away, and reached his arm over the

railing to grab Banagher by the shoulder and pull him onto the catwalk. Banagher practically flew into Zinnerman's clutches, and their helmets were touching each other's.

"Thank you for believing in us, Captain."

"Wha…what are you saying out of a sudden?"

"I feel that I haven't thanked you properly…that's all. Please keep watch here."

For an instant, Zinnerman gave a stare through the visor that could see through someone else's heart, and perhaps he had already seen how fidgety Banagher was within. He grabbed Banagher's helmet with both hands, "We're the one who need to request you." This time, his bearded face closed in on Banagher, and the steady voice caused both helmets to vibrate.

"You have to come back. If the Princess gets even the slightest scratch, your life will be in peril."

The black eyes were full of firm will, just like the stars above the African desert—those stars that would not boast about themselves, that would not guide their path as they continued to twinkle. Those were starts that could soothe anyone whenever they were needed, stars that had the warmth of human skin. This man would never betray him; he could not give up on the human heart, and Banagher had already witnessed this countless less. *I'm just worrying too much.* Once Banagher understood this, the

goosebumps within him disappeared, “I understand.” He left Zinnerman, waved farewell to Flaste, and kicked hard at the catwalk railing to float towards the “Unicorn” cockpit.

(What are you doing, Banagher? You’re in the middle of a launch!)

Mihiro’s growl rang in his ears as he sat back on the linear seat. “I’m really sorry!” Banagher answered as he closed the hatch, let the “Unicorn” head towards the elevator, and apologized to Audrey on the assistant seat. The latter might had realized something as she shook her head slightly and showed a smile, but her expression immediately looked down. Amidst the tremors of the elevator that was starting to rise, the shadows from within shone onto the face under the helmet, leaving the cockpit in an isolated atmosphere no outsider could enter.

The first catapult deck in the middle of the ship was in vacuum. Banagher left the elevator, let the slipper-shaped catapult launcher attach itself to the feet of the “Unicorn”, and looked into space through the opened hatch. They could see the L1 region of the Moon, and the “L1 Junction” shone like a corroded moon in front of their eyes. *This will be the last, or maybe—* Banagher grabbed the control sticks before the following thoughts appeared, “We’re launching.” And said to Audrey,

“There’ll be a jolt from the launch. Watch up.”

“It’s fine. I once launched in a mobile suit together with Ensign Riddhe.”

The calm narrative voice caused Banagher to feel like he remembered a homework assignment he forgot to do. (Path's clear. RX-0, please launch.) He was driven by Mihiro's voice afterwards, "Got it." and did not have time to reflect on Riddhe's name as he answered. He could not deal with it even if he thought of it at this point, and there were other issues to prioritize. His mind forgot about the face of the person who once fought against him on Earth, exchanged looks with Audrey, and looked forward with no intention of looking back.

""Unicorn Gundam", Banagher Links."

"Mineva Zabi."

"Let's go!"

Their voices rang in unison, and the cable-powered catapult was activated. The portside catapult deck that was heavily damaged slid by, and the gliding deck protruding at the bow disappeared from the feet as the all-view monitor showed an endless void. Banagher endured the revolting sense of the blood flowing to his back as he checked on the laser communication with the "Nahel Argama", and used the AMBAC propellers to turn the "Unicorn" around. There was no problem with the reaction speed, control feeling, etc. The newly calibrated beam rifle and shield he drew from the spare supplies responded well with the machine. Once he knew that the repaired mechanical arm was fine, his body felt contented, and the space that was devoid of air resistance and gravity was like a familiar backyard to him. The "Unicorn" rolled sideways, lit its thrusters, and flew in a straight line towards its target.

The Type 94 Base Jabber was launched from the “Nahel Argama ”, and the bed-shaped machine ferrying 2 “Lotos” launched behind the “Unicorn”. The “Lotos” ferrying Conroy and company were to first reach the “L1 Junction” and check the inside of the facilities. (Listen, Banagher, no matter how trivial it is, report any anomaly you see.) Conroy reminded, “Got it. Please take care of me here, ECOAS” and Banagher answered as he ignored the handgun strapped to his ankle. (We’ll make a move first. Head straight towards the ‘light tower’.) After saying this, the 9-type Base Jabber dragged a trail of thruster light as it glided by from the side.

Banagher waited for that light to enter the stars, and took a deep breath. It would take another 5 minutes for him as he was moving to the target through inertia; the coordinates for the ‘L1 Junction’ was fixed, and he just need to let the machine move on its own. “Are you alright?” Banagher looked back at Audrey, and took off his helmet. It was against the rules, but he had to do this to prevent voices from entering. Audrey, who was prompted by Banagher’s stare, removed her helmet too. Her deep inhaling rang beside Banagher’s ears, and this proved how heavy the pressure the atmosphere in the ship was bearing on her.

“The emergency call will reach the console speaker. You can relax.”

“Do I look that tense?”

The expression looked unexpectedly cute, and Banagher looked back at her with a smile. “Is that so…” Audrey lowered her chin

slightly as she looked at the space beside them. The space region that was replicated through CG was slightly blue, and it was insufficient to change their mood. Her sidelong expression, which seemed to be blaming herself for the lack of experience, was immediately filled with a blank relaxation, and Banagher felt that the gloom he saw before was covering that frail white face.

He wanted to see the true identity of this gloom, and if possible, remove it so as to create an atmosphere both of them could share in—but he did not know how to speak up. There were a lot of things he could have talked of, but none of which formed in his heart. After several seconds of silence, he looked in front.

On thinking about it carefully, he knew nothing about Audrey. He did not know her interests, her habits, or even her birthday, but he felt that they understood each other. One would have to wonder why that was so. It was a long, long time ago since the last time they were alone like this, and there were so few times they were together. After a moment a hesitation, he looked at Audrey, " Audrey…" "Well…" but their voices interrupted each other, and they were at a loss of what to do. Banagher's mind was filled with a blank, and he forgot what he wanted to say.

Pressured by the emerald eyes looking at him extremely closely, he turned his eyes away awkwardly and looked forward. The sound of the generator was the only thing occurring as silence descended upon them. "Banagher, do you believe in it?" after that, Audrey's voice broke the silence, and Banagher turned his stare towards her eyes.

"Can we…Neo Zeon and Federation really coexist together?"

It felt as if they wanted to pull out this heavy object slowly, but the tremendous weight crashed upon them. With the sincere stare looking at him, "…The results had shown, isn't it?" Banagher did not look away this time as he cautiously answered,

"Regardless of country and military, everyone should have a world they feel. If everyone believe—"

"The result isn't out yet. I don't know, what will happen before we get the "Laplace Box"…?"

"Audrey…"

"On Earth, I saw a lot of things when I was in Ensign Riddhe's house."

With the Earth behind her the size of a tennis ball, Audrey was looking at a certain place that did not belong. Banagher could only look at the side of her face.

"What the Earthnoids were thinking, how they viewed things, the ideals of the people who created the system called the Federation, the scars Zeon left that could not be erased…even after knowing this, this Mineva Zabi is unable to live in such a world and experience their lives. I understood that the world I knew before was so small."

There was a thin smile, and one could not help but think of the term 'self-deprecaiation'. Banagher was unable to bear watching on as he lowered his head. "That's why I can't be imprisoned by my own narrow views. I need to see the world with a wider view,

regardless of Federation or Zeon; this is what I really think. But maybe even I can't accept this view. I thought of this several times when I was on Earth. I really can't understand these people at all, I can't find a common agreement with them…"

The word uneasiness was enough to describe the gloomy rising from her slender shoulders, and her clenched fists were trembling. She was uneasy that she could not be certain of her own actions, but even so, she had to try her best to keep bluffing; she had a pressure to be very certain of herself, and a self-guilt of fooling everyone. All of this became corrupted as it resonated with his uneasiness of the future, and he felt a mysterious sense of relief spreading deep within his heart.

He was mystified by these emerald eyes, and saw that she was supporting him again—he felt relieved knowing that all this was not true. As long as he believed that her starting point was not wrong, he would have no objections against accepting the current situation, and he could only prepare himself for the future. *As long as I'm with her, there's always a way,* Banagher suddenly thought of how he himself believed in this baseless theory.

"I saw a lot of things on Earth too."

Banagher said to this Audrey Burne he met again. The latter lifted her head slightly, showing her eyes that were full of natural emotions, the same eyes he saw on "Industrial 7".

"I nearly had a calamity in the desert, and I think I understand why humanity's so bent on destroying the Earth. The human body is too weak to live nature. The natural these nature activists talked

of is natural in the sense that it helps humans, but most of it can't be helped. As long as humans remain as beings who want to live better lives, they won't be able to avoid going against nature. I should say that this is natural for humans."

"Someone once said before that everything starts with kind intentions…"

"I thought of it too. The Universal Century was started out of goodwill. The Spacenoids talk about Ere-ism…the drive to preserve Earth as a hometown, but it just feels so off-tangent because of the lack of experience in this sense. The Spacenoids can' t understand as their sense of nature is obtained from space."

"Spacenoids' sense of nature…?"

"I'm thinking of Newtypes are really like this. There's the thinking that there's a need to expand the senses humans have in order to make up for the overly wide space, but it's impossible to experience this without going to space, no?"

Audrey blinked her eyes while looking surprised, nodded and showed an expression of understanding. Banagher lifted the fragments of thoughts in his head and continued,

"And as long there's a possibility that humans may be abandoned in space, Earthnoids will never accept the thoughts Spacenoids have. Spacenoids can't accept that the people left on Earth had special rights, and because of this twisted thinking, they did extreme things like throwing down a colony. It can't be helped that there's no common understanding, but the important thing is

to understand that both sides are living in different worlds. It's just like you said, that the world we live in can't change. Once we admit that we're living in an imperfect world and look for that path to near perfection…"

"A path to near-perfection…are you saying that's a Newtype?"

"If we follow the definition Zeon Deikun laid out, there's still no real Newtype born, though I hope that a few are standing at the door."

Someone worthy of being entrusted with the "Box"—a real Newtype; no matter what his father thought, nobody other than God should decide this. The system hidden in the "Unicorn" relied on the machine to detect the brainwaves, including the artificial Cyber-Newtypes, and there was no real way to determine a real Newtype. It was the same thing as how a single-celled organism floating in the sea of beginning could never predict the evolution of life millions of years later.

"Fate can't be changed, but destiny can. I have everything now …right?" Audrey muttered to herself as she looked at the moon a size larger than a basketball. That uneasy look on her face was erased somewhat. "You're the same as us." Banagher followed up on her words as he too looked at the Moon in front.

"Whether it's the psycoframe that can move celestial bodies, or the "Laplace Box" that can change the world; as long we know such things truly exist, they will feel that humans really shouldn't argue in this situation."

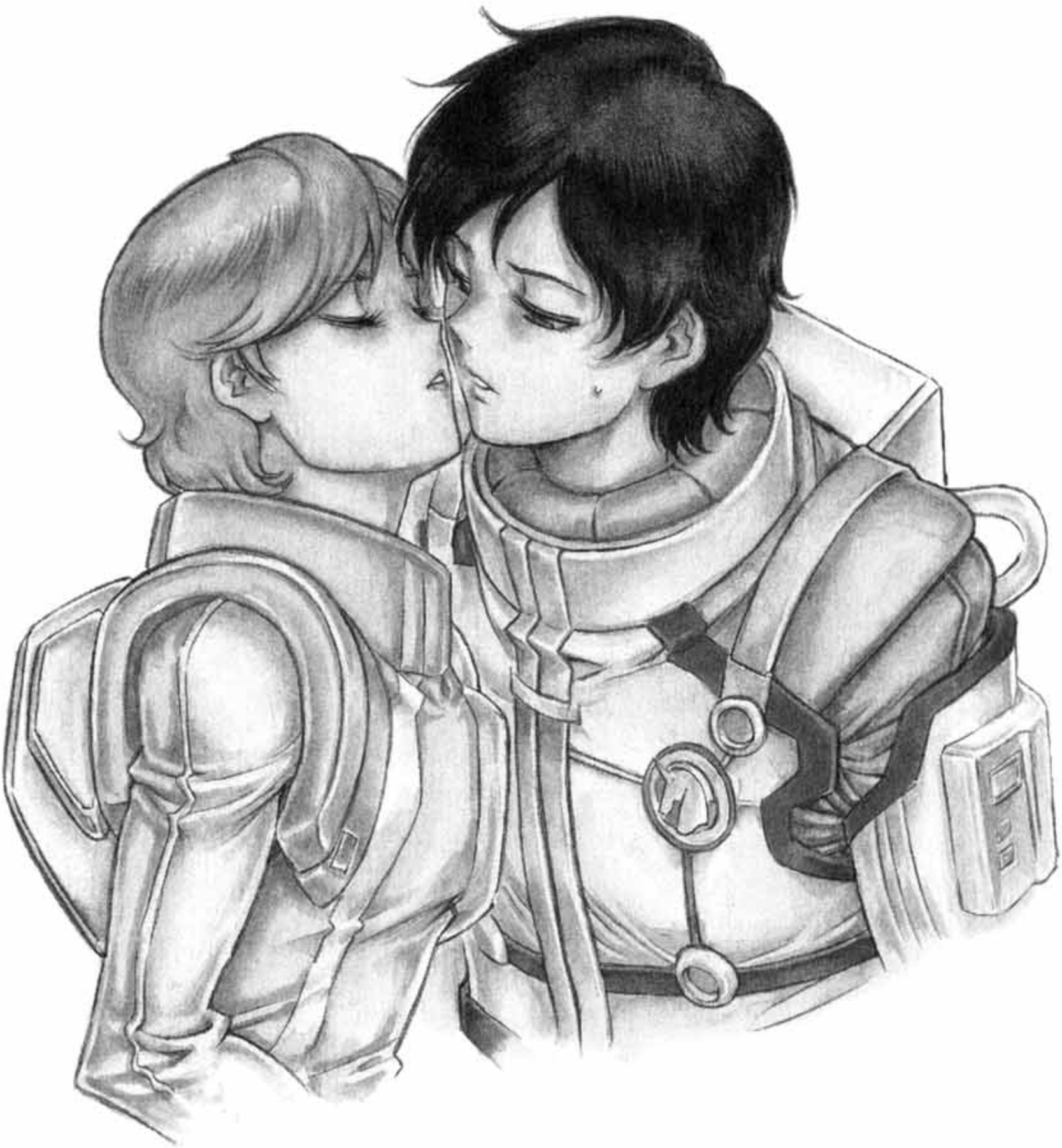
"Yeah. This is…"

"They're still in the "Nahel Argama", but people like the Captain believe in such possibilities. The Federation and Neo Zeon …the common understanding between Earthnoids and Spacenoids is possible. Maybe the release of the "Box" will be the chance for this."

Audrey thought of something, but could not say so as she lowered her head, showing gloom on her face again. "Of course, this is an observation based on my hopes." Banagher hurriedly added on, but she suddenly lifted her head, and let her emerald eyes close in on him.

"I want to believe this too."

She reached her arm out and grabbed Banagher by the upper arm. The forceful strength spread through the fabric, causing him to feel his heart race. *Convince me*…was the voice that rang the voice of reality, or the 'voice' resonating deep within his heart? Banagher was unable to determine as his eyes were rendered immobile by the lips in front of him, and he unwittingly moved his hand onto the back of Audrey's own hand.



Time stood still, and it seemed that everything other than those two vanished. Banagher smelled a whiff of sweetness from the hair as he closed his eyes. Audrey held her breath, and their faces were almost touching as the lingering warmth from her face agitated his nose. Banagher predicted that their lips were going to touch each other, and was unable to think of anything; at that instant, an annoying breathing sound suddenly rang, causing their bodies that were almost united as one to suddenly freeze up.

(T-minus 60 till the designated location. It's about time to open the wireless communicator, you two.)

Conroy's voice rang, and he sounded like he heard everything, causing Banagher to experience what it meant for his face to flare up. He immediately looked forward and answered with a slightly higher pitch than usual, "Understand." He did not have the guts to exchanged looks with Audrey, who hurriedly sat still and put on her helmet again, and he let his stare escape to the 'L1 Junction' that could be identified with the human eye. The snowflake shaped object was glittering as it reflected the distant sunlight, and the light tower in space continued to draw an intricate tessellation in space even as it remained this empty.

"It's so pretty…" Audrey said. Banagher however abandoned all words that would match this atmosphere as he turned his stare to the coordinates meter on the display board. Once he was certain that it was almost 0, he checked the functions of all other systems. The Laplace Box showed no signs of activating, and for a short while, an awkward atmosphere remained in the cockpit.

Part 10

(This is ECOAS 920. We've arrived at the target. The RX-0 is headed to the designated coordinates.)

(Just like the time at the Prime Minister Residence, don't miss out on any minor changes in the sensors. We have no idea what's coming, whether it's electric waves, magnetic waves, radiation or whatever.)

Once Captain Otto's excited voice ended, a sound from the throat reached the man's ears, and the sense of resistance pressing on his hands immediately vanished.

Zinnerman removed the hand pressing onto the man's throat from behind, and pushed the body away. He then grabbed the guard that was floating down the corridor, pulled him into the wareroom, and stuffed him into a corridor packed with cardboard boxes. This was the second man—and it was really easy. His heart felt a sense of hesitation, but his body remembered what he had to do. Alec and the rest on the other team were probably thinking of how to carry out this operation so that they could end things. Zinnerman exchanged looked with Flaste, who was tying the first man with the cable, nodded, and took the wireless communicator from the guard. *There's nothing to be mindful of when we start.* He repeated the words in his heart, and brought the communicator to his mouth.

"Everything's going as planned."

Creak creak. The noise shook the radio, indicating that the other party understood, and that they were proceeding as planned. Zinnerman turned his back on Flaste, who was tying the second man, and brought the hardened plastic attaché case to his hands. This attaché case he took from the "Garencieres" had the private items used for a Captain's log. Naturally, the crew on this ship had inspected it, but in the end, they never found out that the buttons and the attaché case's dial lock could be disassembled to found parts of a mini-handgun, and the handle could become the barrel.

There were 5 of the fire extinguishers they snuck in; they had to deal with these guards before they could take control over the armory of the ship. Zinnerman checked that it was time for the decisive moment, and focused on the assembly of the gun. Flaste, who stuffed the second man into the cardboard boxes, "I didn't expect such a lack of resistance at all." And said with a suspiciously forced voice.

"It'll all depends on what the Princess and the brat do next…"

Is this really alright? the glance that was looking over asked. *There's nothing wrong here. We're Neo Zeon soldiers, this is a Federation ship. We can't think too much, and there's no need for us to do so.* "Don' t worry." Zinnerman answered, slid the assembled mini-handgun, checked the sights, and blew away the dust on the chamber.

"The Princess's more mature than we think, unlike that brat."

The face of the boy, who leapt out from the cockpit and flew over like a puppy, flashed in his mind. *It can't be helped. You live in*

a different world from us. He loaded the 6 25mm bullets into the magazine, let the thumb press on the slide lock, and unlocked the safety to chase after the image in his mind. The sound of the first bullet being loaded shook the air of the wareroom, pressing down slightly on the chest that swallowed the seed of guilt.

Part 11

The 'L1 Junction' was as elegant looking as a piece of jewelry, but had parts that offset the beauty mercilessly. The thick stabilizing cable running through the central core area was 10m in diameter and 7km long, forming a straight line through the two sides of the snowflake crystal.

There was a need to accept two gravity sources in order to stabilize the center of the gravities—the attraction forces from both the Earth and the Moon, and the cable reaching to the sides of each celestial body worked like a pendulum. The "Unicorn", which was approaching the 'L1 Junction' from the Earth, followed the cable, approached the snowflake-shaped core, and reached the designated coordinations.

The range of the coordinates included the space of a 1km diameter with the 'L1 Junction' at center. In space, this was an extremely small space. Banagher let the relative velocity of the machine slow down to match the 'L1 Junction' speed, and cautiously crossed the coordinate space. It had been 3 minutes since they reached, but the "Unicorn" machine did not change in any way. All systems were normal, and the Laplace Program was silent.

"So the condition is to activate the NT-D first?"

"That may be the case…but it immediately transformed the moment it reached when we were at the Prime Minister residence. "

As Audrey looked around, Banagher answered her, and looked at the time on the display board. It had been 4 minutes, and it was weird for the machine to not transform at all. Perhaps he had missed out on something.

"How's the inside, Mr Conroy?"

(It's just an empty wasteland. The solar battery power is still there, but most of the functions are dead. There hasn't been any change ever since the investigation began.)

The two "Lotos" landed on the 'L1 Junction Point' 10 minutes ago; one of them entered the core area through the port, while the other checked the Moon side that was hidden from where they were. The sun was located at the Earth's side, so the side checking from the Moon side could only rely on moonlight for lighting. The "Loto" was most probably in their mobile suit state, flashing the search lights on its shoulders as it move on the solar panels slowly; however, it was impossible for the "Unicorn" on the Moon side to see it. Banagher glanced aside at the Base Jabber remaining at the empty port and let the machine move towards the base of the stabilizing cable. He could see the 'L1 Junction' from up close, and it was not of the same size as a ship. It was not as large as a colony, but it was large enough to be a temporary port, to a point where it could be called a space island.

They were at a loss of what to do. They had no idea how big the "Box" was, let alone what it contained. There were no given instructions, and looking for it here would be a search for a pin in a haystack. Banagher knew that it was useless, but he summoned the 'L1 Junction' construct map that was downloaded beforehand, and stared at the 3D model. (It can't change into the "Gundam"? It released the information just like this in Dakar.) Conroy said. "But I can't change it that freely.". As he answered, "Banagher", Audrey 's anxious voice rang.

"Since it's a plan your father came up with, I don't believe it's so one-sided, but what if the "Box" is an item that brings calamity …?"

The hand touched the helmet to cut the communication line for the time being, and the face could not be described simply as serious. "I understand." After exchanging looks with the stare that was full of killing intent, Banagher answered,

"At that moment, I'll destroy it and prevent it from falling into other people's hands."

These words the words he uttered in his heart once he wanted to know the true identity of the "Box"—when he wanted to know the 'answer'. Banagher stared at the sighing Audrey, and looked up at the 'L1 Junction' which stood like a wall, blocking his sight. " But I don't think that is it." he said as he stepped on the pedal lightly.

"It depends on how we use it; it can be something that brings light to this world…right, it depends on who uses it. He even created a system to distinguish Newtypes for this purpose."

The "Unicorn" left the core and moved towards the outermost region of the snowflake. The civilian ship light moved by from afar below their feet, becoming part of the stars. From the way it moved forward, it seemed to be a ship headed from the Moon to Earth. All ships moving on this course would have to move by the 'L1 Junction'.

"The real identity of the "Box", the path to reach it, it's definitely simpler…"

He looked above, and could see a glowing object shining brighter than the stars. It was the light of the colony, Side 2 that was revolving around L. The Side 5 that revolved around L1—the shoal space region and the "Industrial 7" within it were no longer in sight.

"Starting from "Industrial 7", the first place was the debris of the Prime Minister residence "Laplace"…"

"Laplace" was the place where the Universal Century began, blown up with the world leaders within due to a terrorist attack. Banagher recalled the speech he heard back then; the voice of the first Prime Minister of the Earth Federation from a hundred years ago, on the last day of Anno Domini, narrating the 'past' together with the remnants that were cruelly blown up—

"And next is Dakar, the capital of the Earth Federation…"

The Universal Century Manhattan stood in the middle of the hot desert, and the strengths and weaknesses of the system called the Federation were shown there. Mahdi Garvey's madness that became a sandstorm strong enough to cut skin, Loni's brilliance, race and religion, the karma that could not be held down as it swirled at the bottom, the symbol of the 'present' that stood on the scorching land—

And then, what do I say now? What did father want to tell me by pointing here? Banagher let the "Unicorn" drift in space and looked around. The all-view monitor cut off the CG, showing the actual scenery of space, and he looked around together with the machine that was slowly turning around.

The cockpit that was surrounded by darkness became dim, and the white flare reflected from the 'L1 Junction' lit the place. *No, I still don't understand. Even if I'm determined to be a Newtype, I'm just a human who can only see what's in front of me. Tell me!* Banagher cried out in his heart. *If the lingering thoughts are real and resting in this "Unicorn", lead me to my path now.*

The need to show the power of human gentleness to humanity; you said that this is the responsibility of humans that entered space. The ghost of "Laplace", the First Prime Minister said the same thing too. That's kindness, right? It's the kindness that allows humanity to maintain its sanity, even in this harsh reality, even as we fight against all things unreasonable. As we journey the way to look for the "Box", we see a side of truth to the Earth. We see the world that is mixed with good and evil, hard to decipher, struggling to search for the 'light'. What happens next

is the most important thing; to live in the possibilities brought about by kindness, to use this to survive, and to know what to take note of next. The body of flesh and blood accepts the 'past' and 'present', and what we should face next is—

A heavy heartbeat shook Banagher's body and rocked the cockpit. His heartbeat became one with the "Unicorn", and every pulse caused Banagher to feel his senses expanding. He felt that his nerves were linked to the mechanical fingertips, toes, everywhere, to the point where his senses became as large as the mobile suit.

The Moon was at his feet, and Earth was above him. In front of him was an infinite space. The living beings born on the celestial bodies should be headed to the unexplored world next. They were still limited to this small area of the Earth celestial sphere, but this space was opened in front of them, waiting for humanity to use its power of gentleness to shine its light into the darkness in front of them.

Perhaps one day, as they expand on their senses and understand ways to match their thoughts, when they may even have control over time, this space would be left wide open in front of humanity. They would soon use time, space and possibilities that will never be used up easily and open an unknown territory.

Through the past, the starting point where humanity still stands at this point, space, stars, and humans. The infinite presented by the 3 beings—the future.

"…I understand, father."

The words that were let out unwittingly became 'light', causing the forehead to let out a weak neural-like flash. That light became a V-shaped blade antenna that spread apart, and the luminous light that showed the luminous light of the psycoframe as the armor split apart, and the body of the "Gundam" appeared in vacuum.

However, all Banagher did was to open his eyes naturally. " Banagher…!?" Audrey's doubtful voice agitated his hearing in reality, pulling senses back onto the little body resting on the linear seat.

The signal of the NT-D flashed, and the machine that transformed into the "Gundam" was shown in its active state. Banagher wanted to be sure if Audrey was fine, but realized that the attachments protecting his head were holding it down. *There no need for this.* The attachments were removed the moment he thought this, and his physical body obtained its freedom again as it nearly float up from the linear seat. As he wanted to turn towards the assistant seat, the numerous stars shown on the all-view monitor increased in brightness, and the beams that reached out started to intertwine like they were drawing a constellation.

It was like an Observatory, like a view of the developing brain from within; the flickering stars were linked by their own beams, drawing what seemed to be either a constellation or a neural system, and each area was showing a different light. There were the Earth, Moon and colonies; and just when he was about to check the time, see the respective locations, and confirm the condition of

the mobile suit that was at the place, the “Unicorn Gundam” moved on its own, changed the direction it was facing, and pointed its main camera to a corner in space.

The beams let out by the stars formed arcs around the all-view monitor, pointing at a red dot in the front. Numerous beams vanished, ostensibly absorbed by the red light, leaving behind a light spot that pointed at a place far away, and the logo ‘La+’ appeared beside it.

“Banagher…”

Audrey muttered blankly as she looked at the coordinate data that was beyond her expectant. “Right.” Banagher nodded as his voice came out from his dry throat.

“This is the last coordinate…where the “Laplace Box” is.”

Audrey’s hand that was resting on his shoulder shuddered. Banagher shook his head and moved his eyes that were attracted by the light, and reached his hand to his helmet to check if the wireless communicator was cut off. “Leader Conroy, “Nahel Argama”! The final location of the “Box” is—” but the moment he wanted to say this out, a killing intent rose from below his feet, entering the cockpit, and a light rose, savagely burning a corner of his eyes.

The “Unicorn Gundam” reacted before Banagher could hold onto the control stick, and dodged on its own. The beam of the mega-particles let out a flash, covering the all-view monitor, and the explosions of scattered particles echoed through the cockpit.

Banagher drew the shield from his left hand and put it on the left hand as he let the machine zigzag, keeping his eyes at the source of the shot. The moment the navigation lights of the ships floating afar flashed by his eyes, a second shot was fired from there, and the I-field generator hidden inside the shield scattered the incoming high heat particles.

"At this time…!?"

Is it Federation or Zeon? the enemy chose to hide amongst the passing ships, and Banagher raised the Beam rifle that was loaded with the Beam Magnum. The 'Unicorn Gundam" psycoframe detected this as it piloted the machine, and moved about to find a place he could shoot from. The impact of the anesthetic jolted through the arm, and the air sacks hidden in the pilot suit pressed down on the lower body, preventing the blood from falling, and making the upper body feel warm and uneasy. However, there was a cry like a wild beast at the next instant, causing Banagher to feel his hairs stand.

"Audrey!?"

He turned his head that was held down by the linear seat. Audrey's upper body was forced back as she was pressed down by the accelerating G-force that could kill, and it was impossible to see her expression. It was impossible to endure the high mobility of the destroy mode without using the pilot suit and the linear seat . Banagher immediately relaxed his foot on the pedal and tried to focus on the killing intent that was closing in from afar.

The mega-particles grazed past the “Unicorn Gundam” that slowed down, and the heat and shock plummeted on the machine. As the cockpit shook wildly, the ‘La+’ light in a corner of space spun above, and the red light flickered from time to time.

Part 12

The white machine on the enlarged window staggered to the right due to the shockwave of the mega-particles. Even if the enemy machine were to move out of his sights, there was no need to worry about missing it. The enemy’s movements were dull, and the mobility could be caught up with through the tracking system.

“That “Gundam” isn’t as amazing as what those rumors say. Keiman’s team is to deal with the “Nahel Argama”. I’ll handle this guy alone!”

Gilligan called into the wireless communicator and aimed the reticule of the beam launcher at the white machine. The low power of the generator caused the “Hizack” to be rather limited in its use of beam weaponary, but this custom unit had enough people to release the power of a sniper rifle. It had been less than 10 minutes since he launched from the mother “Gultoppr”, and he had already met this large prey. He aimed at the Zeon archenemy, the white mobile suit he saw several times on the documentaries, and let an umpteenth beam fly through the L1 space region.

The machine using the shield to block the front and deflect the scattered particles again went out of his sight. “Don’t you dare run away…!” Gilligan’s lips curled up as he said this, and used the

AMBAC to balance himself as he stepped on the pedal. The thrusters on the back and legs let out flares, and as the “Hizack Custom” that was pursuing the “Gundam”, the 2 Keiman squadron “Hizacks” passed by below. The mobile suit squadron of the “Dromi” attacked from another direction, and Gilligan could see the “Mock Wooden Horse”—the “Nahel Argama” fire numerous anti-air shots.

It was a ship with its portside catapult deck damaged, but the number of fire trails was more than what he imagined. Keiman’s team could not attack, and scattered away. A series of missiles exploded in a corner, letting out huge fireballs that even the simulation shots could not compare to. The scattered dummy aerolite looked like Gilligan’s allied machines, causing him to feel cold sweat breaking.

Attack in a large scale and distract the ship’s attention to the outside. This was the content of the wireless signal from the “Mock Wooden Horse”, and it was possible to guess the reasoning behind this. However, one could only imagine what the sender’s situation was like. 'What will happen if the other 2 mobile suits launch? Can we hang on until the sender takes action? *This sudden thought caused Gilligan to tremble all over, but he felt his adrenaline rising, and the blood in his body felt a boiling sensation.*

This was different from the mock drills of red team and blue team where he worked together with the people he knew at the Defense College. It was an enemy he had never seen before, and the sense of tension arose as he could not determine the current situation, where a single mistake in the prediction would lead to death. This was--

"War…is it…?"

He muttered and licked his dry lips. He remembered the useless weapon skills, the meaningless research he kept proceeding with were all for this moment. He remembered the days where he kept doing assignments he did not need to hand in and merely locked himself in the vault of self-satisfaction—this would be the day where he clear the vault. He nurtured skills, instincts and a hardy will in an old machine; he had to take down that "Unicorn" to prove that this was not all a waste.

Gilligan continued to let the "Hizack Custom" release its maximum thruster to pursue the "Gundam", darting around, looking like it was all fluff and no substance as it escaped into the ' L1 Junction'. He used the two manipulators to wield the beam launcher that was as long as the mobile suit itself, waited for the energy to charge, and squeeze the trigger. The beam flew in a straight line in this space of actual combat, shooting a black hole through the solar panel the "Gundam" was hiding at.

Part 13

"The Zeon Republic?"

The beam grazed by near the bridge as Otto repeated these words, and the flash and tremors overwhelmed all his senses. " That's right!" The sensor operator roared with a voice no softer than the explosions.

"It's the Musai-Kai class "Gultoppr" and "Dromi"! They requested for an offshore trip in the name of training their fleet!"

The sensor screen showed the CG of the Musai-Kai class ships and the data of the "Hizacks" that were attacking. If they were to believe the identification data on the records, both were weapons that were currently in active service for the Zeon Republic. To the " Nahel Argama", who had been wary of the pursuit from the Federation and Neo Zeon, the real identity of this enemy was completely beyond their expectations— "What's going on…" Otto muttered, but nobody was in the mood to answer him, and he turned his sights to the main screen. There were 8 "Hizacks", including the enemy that was attacking the "Unicorn Gundam". In contrast, the only mobile suits they could send out to intercept immediately were the "ReZEL" and the "Stark Jegan". Even if they were facing old mobile suits that were produced more than 10 years ago, it would be tough for them against such overwhelming numbers. And if the Musai-Kai ships on standby were to start firing their cannons…

He regretted not deploying mobile suits to defend the ship just because they did not detect any enemies. The radar had already caught sight of the Republic's ships, but who was to expect that this unrelated party would suddenly launch an attack? Otto slammed the Captain's seat armrest hard, "Hasn't the mobile suit squad launched yet!!!?" he roared, but Mihiro replied. "Negative! The enemy's attacks are too intense—" her words were interrupted by an explosion from below their feet. (First generator room is on

fire!) (Emergency response team! Your reaction is too slow! What are you doing!?) The furious calls through the ship communicator echoed in the bridge.

The engine was not hit directly, but the enemy's attacks could be said to be indiscriminate. They had no intent of breaking through the anti-air fire, just doing hit and runs over and over again. If this were to keep up, who knew how long it would take before the bridge took a direct hit. Otto realized that nobody on the bridge was dressed in a normal suit, including himself, "Anyone can go. Just get the normal suits!" he yelled, "We sent someone here!" Liam replied loudly, her face showing some shadows lit by the flashes of the cannons.

"What is the "Gundam" doing!? Can't we call him back!?"

"The line's dead. He hid behind the 'L1 Junction', and it looks like he's in a tough battle."

"Tell the ECOAS "Lotos" to support him. The enemy's using old mobile suits, so it shouldn't be an opponent that's tough to deal with—"

"That boy can't fight properly."

Upon hearing Liam's murmuring, Otto swallowed the words he was about to say. "Princess Mineva is on board too, so…" he felt a chill as he saw how she was having difficulty expressing herself, and looked at the lights of explosions that occurred near the 'L1 Junction' outside the window. There was no need to imagine how it was like on the assistance seat lacking in G-force resistance,

exposed to the monstrous mobility. He clicked his tongue upon realizing that he neglected to think about this, "But if this keeps up …" the moment he muttered, the door behind opened as the explosion rang.

Are the normal suits here now? "Too slow! Hurry…!" Otto turned his stare behind his chair, but lost his voice as his body froze on the Captain's seat. It was not the crew member who went to get the normal suit. The fatal anomaly that brought about this sudden scenario—the anomaly betrayed the little developments that happened for the past few days as it stood at the door of the Captain's seat.

Liam too gasped as she remained rooted to the floor, but Mihiro and the sensor operator stopped what they were doing in shock. Otto had been feeling that the movements of each department had been remarkably slow ever since the battle began, and as he digested the overly perfect timing of the Republic's attack, he realized the reality he was facing as he exchanged looks with the anomaly standing at the door. They exchanged stares for a while, and the submachine gun in this anomaly's hand broke this standoff as the dark flash suppressor was looking over at him.

The one standing with the gun showed the expression of someone who understood how important this role was. Resistance is futile. As a commander, there is only one thing I can do—*the moment he grabbed onto the armrest tightly, "DO YOU HAVE NO SHAME…!" Liam hollered as she took a step forward. Otto wanted to stop her, but it was too late as the muzzle of the submachine gun let out a flash, creating a light that was more dazzling than the explosions outside the window.*

Part 14

The enemy drew the beam saber from the shield on its shoulder, and charged right in with a bright glow that sliced through the darkness; however, this enemy made a fatal mistake. The blade hit the warning light of the solar panel before it swung down, and missed the chance to slash.

Banagher had a rough grasp of the overly straight and direct movement. It was easy to dodge it, and he could counterattack with the beam saber beside him, but he knew that Audrey would not be alright. He used the shield to block the slash, gave up on moving to the back of the enemy unit, and let the "Unicorn Gundam" retreat to the Moon side. *I can't use the thrusters.* This thinking caused his reaction to dull, and he could not control the machine well as it spun in an awkward manner. His efforts to adjust his balance with the AMBAC were in vain as the machine let out a shock as it crashed into the stabilizing cable. "Leave me alone for now, Banagher!" Audrey's loud voice echoed in this cockpit that was shaking tremendously.

"Fight properly! If this keeps up—"

The enemy "Hizack Custom" kicked itself off the warning lights pillar and approached quickly from near the feet, raising the beam saber in its hands. This however was the same pattern; Banagher knew that he would miss, but shot the Beam Magnum at the enemy unit. The mega particles compressed in the Magnum magazine were released, and a large beam exploded, grazing by the monoeyed giant. The solar panels in its path were scorched

completely, and there were visible scars on this 'L1 Junction' that could be seen from afar. However, the distance was not close enough to take down an enemy through impact. Banagher let the machine approach the outermost area of the core and hid in the shadows of the panel joints; the "Hizack Custom" did not react as he expected, and did not fire back. Banagher was already in the enemy's firing path, but the machine wielding the beam launcher seemed to panic as it retreated, and flew in a straight line to hide in a blind spot of the 'L1 Junction'.

At this moment, another "Hizack" flew by from the other side of the Moon, frantically firing its machine gun. It did not try to suppress the "Loto" hiding in the core, looking for a chance to interfere in the battle as it stood on the same path as the other machine. Banagher aimed the barrel of the beam rifle to suppress it without even using his Beam Magnum, guessed that the enemy would dodge it, and fired the Vulcan cannons on its head. The 60mm physical bullets flew out in a fan, and the "Hizack" dodged just as Banagher expected, letting out a flash of a direct hit on the feet. The machine immediately dodged, but its thruster output was too much, and turned back to leave the battle space region immediately. The enemy unit had no intention to fire suppressing shots, forgot to work together with their allies, and only intended to come in with guts. *Are they terrified after seeing the power of the Beam Magnum?*

"These guys are complete amateurs…"

He let out these words from his deflated body. It was not a question of machine functions, as the Zeon remnants on Earth had used machines older than the current enemies, and managed to

fight the newest machines of the Federation to a standstill. It escaped from the shadows of the structure and flew above the solar panels. “That’s a Republic’s machine.” Audrey spoke at this instant, and Banagher again looked at the CG corrected image caught on the enlarged window.

Prompted by her words, Banagher realized that he had seen those shiny grey machines that were not suitable for combat on the news before. The news footage of the Federation space army exercise would occasionally have Zeon Republic mobile suits shown on it. *Is it working with the Federation’s safety clause to attack a ship that defied orders?* He looked at the machine that had the design of the “Sleeves”, but was vastly inferior in technology. “The Republic…” Just when he was about to ask back, the wireless communicator, hindered by Minovsky particles, let out a person’s voice that rang clearly amidst the noise.

(…Banagher, “Unicorn Gundam”, do you hear me?)

Banagher left the blind side of the ‘L1 Junction’, and it seemed that the laser communication had reverted back to normal. The signal position was automatically parsed through, and once the window caught sight of the enlarged visual of the “Nahel Argama ”, the gruff voice he was used to hearing continued.

(This is Lieutenant Zinnerman. Cease battle immediately and abide by the Republic’s instructions. The “Nahel Argama” is currently under our occupation, and if you don’t follow our instructions, we will not guarantee the safety of the Captain and the crew.)

Banagher could not understand what he just heard as a blunt impact passed through his forehead. His body and mind were relaxed in an instant, and he was unable to move, "…What?" as he let out this question as he placed his hand on the helmet.

"I don't understand, Captain. What are you saying? You occupied the "Nahel Argama"…"

(It's exactly what I mean. As long as you follow my instructions, I won't hurt you. Disengage immediately.)

The approaching alarm suddenly rang, and a part of his consciousness that nearly left returned to his physical body. The " Hizacks" which retreated for a moment drew a large arc as it closed in gradually. These two machines separated from each other, closing in in an encircling manner, obviously showing that they were in sync with this wireless feed. "Wa-wait a moment…" Banagher groaned as he let his back rest on the linear seat. His pulse was beating fast, and cold sweat was trickling down him.

"What's going on, Captain!? Please explain, explain what you mean clearly!"

There was no response. The "Nahel Argama" was behind the approaching "Hizacks", about 100km away from the 'L1 Junction', being extremely quiet. It did not launch any anti-air fire, and the Republic's mobile suits were gradually gathered around the silent ship. *What? What's going on here?* Banagher's thoughts and stare kept wavering, and he turned his head to look at Audrey beside him. "Say something too, Audrey." The lowered head however shook a little, and the emerald eyes looked back at him.

"The Captain's acting weird. He seems to be mistaken about something. Come talk to him…"

The eyes that should be doubtful over the exact same situation remained full of gloom and doubt in the chilling silence. She, who had been preaching about the possibility of the Federation and Neo Zeon working together—no, the more she preached, the more doubtful she got. She was saying wordless that she knew this would happen, she was afraid of this, and she had gloomily accepted this situation that could not be reversed…

The hand grabbing her shoulder lost strength as it floated in space without a target. "How can that…" the words that were leaked out remained in the helmet, and Banagher opened it as he felt difficulty in breathing. Audrey too looked down, her expression not moving as the "Nahel Argama" too remained silent . *What are you doing there?* Banagher's wavering stare looked on at the white ship as he muttered in his mouth. *You can't save anyone even if you do that. You understand this more than anyone else, who what are you doing there?*

"It's the usual Captain, saying that he won't forgive me if you get hurt, laughing like usual…this is too weird. Why is it like this? The Cap…Captain…"

"Zinnerman."

Audrey interrupted Banagher's never ending uttering as she lifted her head to say this. The latter was shocked by her, who was not Audrey, but had the expression and voice of Mineva, and stared at her sidelong silently.

"I command you, in the name of Mineva Zabi…you won't listen even if I say this, right?"

(That's right.)

"Is that so…how unfortunate."

A tint of gloomy flashed by Audrey's lowered face in an instant, and she opened the visor of the helmet to give an adamant look back at Banagher. She cut the communication line immediately and spoke quickly, "Banagher, destroy the "Unicorn"." For a moment, Banagher could not understand what she just said.

"Zinnerman made contacts with the "Sleeves", and the reinforcements will be here immediately. Before the "Box" lands in their hands—"

(Banagher, take Mineva Zabi as hostage.)

Another voice immediately rang in the helmet again, and Banagher widened his half-opened eyes.

"Mr Conroy…"

(It's a critical situation now. This concerns the lives of the crew.)

Banagher looked at the source coordinates of the signal, and turned his stare to the 'L1 Junction' behind him. He could not identify the "Lotos" hidden inside the core area, and he could only see the vivid image of Conroy's stern expression as the latter handed the handgun over. Banagher looked over and saw the

automatic handgun strapped in the leather holster on his right ankle. There was a glossy black handle revealed from the gaps of the buckle—*use this to point at Audrey? Why?*

(Stop it Banagher, you can't do it.)

Zinnerman's voice interrupted, and his familiar voice echoed in Banagher's mind as the latter pressed onto his helmet with both hands.

(Think about it, you can't change anything if you hand the "Box " over to the Federation. Once they rebuild their coexisting relationship with the Vist Foundation, the Princess and the rest of us will be buried in the darkness. Think about Marida; you should know the methods they use here.)

"But the people on the "Nahel Argama"…Captain Bright won't do this—"

(What can a mere soldier do? We can only do this to save them. If we aren't divided between Federation and Neo Zeon, we should be thinking about the same thing.)

This isn't it. Banagher thought, but while he thought about why this was not the case, he could not think of an answer, and looked at Audrey. The emerald eyes were wordless, (Don't be fooled) Conroy's voice rang,

(They're experts at lying. Don't listen to them; you have the trump card here.)

(Are you going to believe those men who intend to use the Princess as a hostage? Come with us, Banagher. This is for the good of the Princess too.)

The "Hizack Custom" was already at a distance the human eye could see, aiming its beam launcher at Banagher's unit, ready to fire anytime too, causing the latter to feel revolted. (This is Lieutenant Gilligan Eustace of the Zeon Republic army. Lower your weapon immediately and open the hatch…) Upon hearing the voice of the pilot, Banagher clenched his fist that was drenched in sweat. *Destroy the machine, surrender to Neo Zeon, take Audrey as a hostage; everyone only cares about themselves, think about their own side. Is it right for me to destroy the "Unicorn" like this? Do I destroy this machine that is the only path to the "Box", the one that sent me on a journey from the past, present and future, the path leading to Father's ideals of wanting to present the possibilities of humanity—*

(Do you hear me? Lower your beam rifle…)

The pilot's hysterical voice continued. "SHUT UP!" Banagher however interrupted him as he used the momentum to step on the pedal.

The "Unicorn Gundam" suddenly accelerating and crashed into the "Hizack Custom" in front of it. The impact shook the cockpit, " Banagher…!" and Audrey shouted as she shook about, but he ignored her. He did not look at the "Hizack Custom" that was sent flying, and stared right at the white hull of the "Nahel Argama".

I haven't thought of anything yet; I just want to see the Captain's face. I can't continue on with this conversation without us facing each other,

and we won't be able to understand each other like this. That profile took care of me when we crossed the desert; you held back in our fight above Dakar. You hated the meaningless massacre below you and allowed me to charge out silently—

A narrow flash crossed by in front of his eyes, and his burning head was cooled by this dampener. He instinctively stopped and let the "Unicorn Gundam" turn at practically 90 degrees, but upon hearing a collapsed lung-like gasping, he felt the blood drain off from his body.

He forgot that Audrey was present too, and he turned his head back to see her limp there. "Audrey!" Banagher exclaimed as he shook her shoulder.

Idiot, I'm an idiot. She's the only one left I have to protect no matter what. He was driven by his fear and patted her face in the helmet several times; her trembling eyes opened slightly, and her unfocused eyes were looking back at him. The moment he was about to heave a sigh of relief, (Calm down, Banagher.) a new voice came in through the wireless communicator, causing Banagher to feel the numbness on his hand that was touching Audrey.

(Your actions will implicate many people's lives. It is better for you not to mess around)

Some objects fired a trail of threatening shots—and the cabled operation pods retracted back upon the arms of an abnormally shaped mobile suit near Banagher. Behind the purple machine that resembled a rose was a machine with bright red armor, appearing

behind the “Nahel Argama”, causing Banagher to stare intently at it.

“Full Frontal…”

Audrey, who seemed to have regained consciousness, said blankly. The “Sinanju” passed by the purple machine and matched its speed with the “Nahel Argama” as it stood in front, not raising the beam rifle in its hand as it looked down at the “Unicorn Gundam”. Two “Geara Zulus” raised the beam launchers in its place, and their monoeyes were giving off intimidating lights, just like the purple machine. Banagher saw that these were veterans that were used to fighting, different from the “Hizacks” of the Republic, and imagined the masked face he saw on “Palau” with the red machine.

(Surrender. This is the best option now.)

The voice rang beside his ears, corroding his mind as it continued. The hands holding the control sticks lost strength, and Banagher's unfocused expression was fluttering in space. *The best path, the path leading to the future, what Father left to me.* These completely unrelated words spun in his mind, festered, collapsed, and lost all meanings; he did not have the ability to think of what was the best option any more, and was left in a moment of ridiculous rambling as his empty mind had no where to go to.

Perhaps it was for this reason that he could not react immediately when Audrey got up from her assistant seat and reached her hand for his legs. When he realized that the handgun was drawn out, it was already pointed at his abdomen, and he finally looked at her face.

Audrey. He wanted to call her, but he could not, and the hard block pressing on his abdomen was the only thing he could feel. Audrey continued to exchange stares with Banagher, "It's been tough on you, Captain Full Frontal." She said quietly,

"The pilot of the "Unicorn" can't make a decision coolly in this situation. I've taken over the cockpit."

(Is this fine…Your Highness Mineva?)

"It can't be helped since things have already developed till this point. Where do I go next?"

(Just land on the "Nahel Argama". Can you disarm it?)

Frontal's voice was rather calm. "Audrey…" Banagher eked out the voice from his throat, and saw that she was showing much restrain on her expression. *Was it an act?* He wanted to find out from it, but the emerald eyes did not answer. The gun was pressed at his abdomen with more force, and a stare pierced through his body and mind, ostensibly testing the hardness of something. Banagher's heart was shaken deep down, and he realized this was an important situation. He closed his eyes for a moment, and took a deep breath before looking in front.

He unlocked the control stick and dropped the beam rifle from the right manipulator. The NT-D flashed at this moment, and the psycoframe light that could be seen from even within the cockpit vanished. The expanded frame shrank, the sliding armor returned back to its fixed position, the bladed antenna closed to form the lone horn again, and the dual-eye sensors under it lost all glow. Banagher checked that the red light of "La+" vanished and that the machine was back to its "Unicorn" state, and lit its thrusters to close its distance with the "Nahel Argama".

The "Geara Zulu" grabbed the beam rifle floating in space, and Banagher followed it to the white ship that was in Neo Zeon's grasps. Hostility, suspicions, conscience; Banagher felt the numerous stares and emotions around him, and he focused on letting the "Unicorn" move forward. Trusting others—as he personally experienced how difficult it was to do this, he put his thoughts on the life that was connected to this gun. As Audrey

continued to point the gun at him, Frontal's "SInanju" stood above him, staring down at them, and the machine that was the embodiment of the Red Comet continued to float in the darkness.

Chapter 3

Part 1

"…Did you hear the broadcast in the bridge? All personnel are to head to the mobile suit deck without exception."

"But you can't extract the people with drips here, you know!? How am I supposed to deal with them under zero gravity? It's okay if we're talking about the guys in the infirmary, but the patients in the ICU can't move. There's a clause in the constitution that allows for wounded soldiers to be treated too."

This familiar voice rang with a stubborn force of anger in her ears. Marida Cruz widened her eyes, and her blurry stare looked around.

She saw the white ceiling of what seemed to be an infirmary. It was not the ceiling of the "Garencieres", and once she understood this, there was a weak electrical surge flowing through her body, and she turned her heavy head in the direction where the sound came from. There was a hulking male figure outside the curtains surrounding the infirmary bed, wriggling there; it was someone she knew, one of the members of the "Garencieres" crew, Alec, the backup steering pillow. He had a bulky figure, but he was timid, and at this point, he was holding onto a sub machine-gun. She also had an impression on the man in white clothes, whom the gun was being pointed to, but she was not too familiar with him. He was

the military doctor in charge of treating her when she was captured and brought aboard the "Nahel Argama", and she remembered that he was called Hasan…

Suddenly, a headache caused her blurry vision to be interrupted . *What's going on? Wasn't I brought to Earth?* Her body felt heavy, and her mouth still felt a little numb; she felt gravity, but she wondered whether she was on Earth or in space—she closed her eyes, and then opened them again, and looked outside the curtain with a clearer vision this time. "Say something too, Mr. Gael." Hasan said as he looked past Alec, and stared upon the 3rd figure.

"It was for a short moment, but you did work together with them, right? Even if you want to occupy a ship, there has to be some basic rules here. Isn't there anyone easier to negotiate with?"

From the gap between the curtains, she could see the side face of a silent man. She looked into the black eyes of the bald man who seemed to be full of vigor, and realized that this was a face she saw before too…as she thought about this, "It's useless." A sudden voice caused her eyelids to numb.

"We've been on this "Nahel Argama" far longer than the time he spent on the "Garencieres"."

Zinnerman said as entered her vision, and he looked at the man called Gael. They exchanged sinister looks, and after a moment, Zinnerman looked away. "…It's useless to hope for terrorists to abide by rules, is it?" Hasan said these words, and Zinnerman turned his firm stare over at him.

"That's how it is. If we're not recognized as soldiers, there's no need for us to follow the rules."

ZInnerman pulled the handgun from his waist and pointed it at Hasan nonchalantly. The sudden tense atmosphere jolted Marida's dull body, and her body shuddered as she laid on the bed. Zinnerman however seemed to notice her presence, and shuddered for a moment before looking over at her. "Dr. Hasan." Gael brought the silence.

"Zinnerman's serious here. It's best to listen to him now."

"But…"

"We can only let them take the men away. They should be able to recognize that we're bringing along necessary medical equipment."

Gael again looked at Zinnerman in the eyes, showing an embolism of restrained emotions. "You need to let us check through the stuff." Zinnerman frowned as he said this, and then lowered his gun pointing at Hasan. The latter glared back, but left unwillingly after being prompted by Gael, "I'll help out too. Let's go." Alec seemed to be relieved, but Gael did not care as he followed Hasan.

"How unfortunate."

Gael's burly frame muttered as he passed by Zinnerman, and then disappeared from her vision. Alec too left, and the side of Zinnerman's face was the only thing left through the gap of the

curtains. The black eyes tried to suppress the emotions it just could not do so, and they were twitching on his emotionless face. *Master seems to be in pain. Why am I still lying in such a place?* Marida bent her back, wanting to bring her upper body up, but the tremendous pain on her flank caused her to grit her teeth in agony, "Mas…ter …" and she eked out the voice in an interrupted manner. Zinnerman walked over to her in large steps, and the bearded face she ostensibly had not seen in a while covered the light panel on the ceiling.

The faded leather jacket gave a little gunpowder smell. The chilly air outside flowed into the bed, causing her to feel a little tense as she laid down it defenseless. "This is…?" She let out a dry voice, and could not exert strength into her limbs freely. Zinnerman placed his hand on her forehead, "Don't worry." He said silently,

"I won't ask you to move, so just sleep for a while here. Everything will be over when you wake up next time."

The touch of the rugged palm moved from the forehead to the eyelids, giving warmth that seeped into her body and mind. *That's right. This is the hand that called me, and pulled me out from the darkness.* Marida recalled this, but this was still unable to shake off her sleepiness. She closed her eyes slightly, and reached her arm that ostensibly had the drip on it at Zinnerman; her outstretched fingers touched the latter's. *It's daddy's hand.* This non-contextual line appeared in her mind, and the body warmth of Zinnerman beside her vanished.

There was the sound of the curtains being pulled up, and the body that was surrounded by the cold and silent air outside drifted away gradually. Marida watched the back silhouette that was full of hardship, realized that she had no ability to support him, and let her body, ostensibly as heavy as lead, sink into the bed.

Part 2

This space was way too spacious for Gilligan, whose eyes were already used to the mobile suit deck of the Musai-Kai. The ceiling that was 7 levels tall was 30m in height, and the walls that were probably80m long had many hangars for maintenance lined up. *If there's another deck for launching and landing, this ridiculously large yet empty place is most likely a storage. There's a construction area for disassembly located below the floor, and yet they managed to preserve a space 2 times smaller than this; got to hand it to them there.*

"I suppose only those people with their souls sucked away by gravity can think of making a mobile suit stand on this deck."

Upon hearing Gilligan's little half-joke, "Yeah." Lieutenant Keiman answered. It had been 2 years since Gilligan last entered a Federation's ship for a common exercise, but the "Mock Wooden Horse"—the "Nahel Argama" had far more surplus items compared to the other ships. He looked at the 12 hangars lined along the wall, and felt that it was truly a waste of space. A Republic's ship would effectively use the space on the ceiling and the floor to ferry double the number of mobile suits.

However, the “Nahel Argama” was in a situation which could only be described as desolated. There were 2 standard sized machines on the hangars, and there were 2 of the “Sleeves” Geara Zulu beside it; on the opposite wall, there were 4 Gultoppr squadron’s “Hizacks” lined up, with Gilligan’s custom unit at the forefront. The Federation units with the goggles were moved to a corner to make space for the monoeyed units that inherited the design of the “Zaku”, and this scene was the best proof that this ship was under the dominion of Zeon. However, these were merely large tools used to enact the current situation. Gilligan poked his body out from the catwalk beside the hangar and let the atmosphere of sovereignty enter his eyes.

The bright red armor leaned its back against the wall close to the bow, ostensibly floating in the air. That was the “Sinanju”, the unit of Full Frontal, whom they called the Second Coming of Char. The presence it gave off really gave a vibe that it was the true revival of the Red Comet. This “Sleeves” mobile suit was truly the baron of this current atmosphere. The cockpit covered laced with gold ornaments on the side opened, the pilot appeared from within, and the mask that covered the eyes and the forehead left more confidence in Gilligan’s heart as he felt affirmed.

It seemed true that the man really would not wear a normal suit even in battle. As his eyes pursued the bright red uniform, “It’s just like Char…” Gilligan muttered to himself, and he touched the rank insignia sewn on his mantle, dangling in front of his chest. The insignia that was sewn onto the mantle through memory fibers would not float easily even in zero gravity. The place was secure in the airlock, but it certainly would not be a good idea to remove their normal suits in the mobile suit deck of an enemy ship

; however, Gilligan commanded his subordinates to change into the Republic army's mantles, as he felt that by wearing the clothes given by the Federation, he could not become one with the current atmosphere.

What kind of people are we, the Republic army, to him? Gilligan tidied his mantle as his eyes pursued after Frontal, and then, the white mobile suit caused him to frown. The lone horned giant standing at the bow side of the deck did not match the deck dominated by the Red Comet. "Is that the "Gundam"…?" Keiman seemed to have seen the same thing as he muttered, and Gilligan looked at the "Unicorn" while suppressing the incensed look of his face.

"Yeah. It becomes like that when the horns on its head closes. I don't know what it means though."

Keiman however did not look back at Gilligan as the latter uttered these words, and reached his neck out from the railing to look at the "Unicorn". Keiman's squadron was assigned to attack the "Nahel Argama" directly, and thus, he did not witness the monstrous fighting strength that "Gundam". The fear back then became cold sweat that appeared on Gilligan's forehead, and he clenched his fists that were holding onto the railing.

That "Gundam" was not only superior in terms of capabilities, but also showed disposition. It crushed Gilligan's belief that he could defeat tens or hundreds of people with only Patriotism, and showed the true disposition of a battlefield. His body was once swallowed up by it, and shriveled back when he only thought of how to escape from its firing range. If it was not for the espionage

mission by the “Sleeves” on the “Nahel Argama” ceasing the battle one-sidedly, he would have escaped back to the “Gultoppr” without caring about his pride. That “Gundam” had at least put a dampener upon him, and it was an undeniable fact that the enthusiasm he had right from the beginning was all gone without a trace.

What kind of guy is that pilot? Gilligan looked at the gondola beside the cockpit of the “Unicorn”, and looked at the pilot who seemed to be the size of a bean from where he was, but the rumbling of the partition wall at the aft opening. The large wall caused the entire deck to tremor, and two small mobile suits entered, followed by a uniquely-shaped purple mobile suit with 3 claws on each of its two hands. Gilligan saw the two mini units before; they were most likely tasked with moving the mobile suits from the landing deck. They were accompanying the unit of the escort squad leader, Lieutenant Angelo’s “Rozen Zulu”; someone called it as such through the wireless communicator before.

The two mini mobile suits were chased away from the “Rozen Zulu”, which knelt down as it passed through the partition wall; they moved to a corner of the deck and stopped. These mini mobile suits were less than half the size of the “Rozen Zulu”, and were like little children that were caught in a prank and brought back; however, the technology used on them were definitely of the latest, for they were able to downside the generator and the propulsion system to this extent. “Those are the Manhunter machines.” Keiman muttered at Gilligan’s ears, causing the latter to frown. The Manhunters was the derogative name given to the

special forces ECOAS, and this symbol of the Federation government's caprice became a topic common amongst the "Wind's Assembly".

Suddenly, Gilligan felt uneasy. It would take more than a day for the "Sleeves" fleet hiding in Side 6 to reach them. During this time, they had to occupy the "Nahel Argama" with the people they had here. Including the shackled crew brought here by the mobile suits, there were only 16 people on Frontal's team. Including the workers that snuck in here—the Garencieres team had less than 50 people. Of course, they would also need to assign people for outside security, so the numbers occupying the ship will be less. The invigilation of the inside of this ship would have to consist mainly of the special forces sent over by the "Gultoppr" and the "Dromi". Even including the 30 Special Forces members sent by the 2 ships, the number of people that could keep watch over this ship would be less than a hundred.

This number would have been enough for the 400 "Mock Wooden Horse" crew members that was probably disarmed, but it would be a different case altogether if there were ECOAS members involved. They went through hellish training, and were deemed as monsters by those who were also soldiers. In comparison, this side had Republic soldiers, of which two-thirds hardly went through actual combat. *Can we actually suppress them?* Gilligan wondered, and felt doubt in his uneasy heart.

Gilligan himself realized that this was due to the fear caused by his experience with the "Gundam". The "Gundam" pilot had personally taught him that the difference of life and death on a battlefield was all on personal spirit, but the contents of the

clashing wills were different from what he imagined. It was something cruder, more realistic; it was a simple yet powerful emotion, of not wanting to die, but it felt no different from being thrown into a dangerous workplace. There was no sense of justice to delight himself in, no room for any high level tactics to interfere; it was a terror where he could be killed by a truck or a crane, a violent death he would be helpless against. To him, who had no sense of work ethic, and managed to hang on till now because his ideals, it took him all his effort not to be blown away by the blowing winds.

However, it was different from what he imagined. To put it simply, this would be all the explanation, but there was something behind this abnormal feeling, one that could cause the current situation to collapse. “Are we really fine? We’re going to be alone before the main forces of the “Sleeves” arrive…” Keiman continued, and Gilligian looked at the ECOAS mobile suit that got into a landing position. “I heard that the Garencieres team is full of hardened solders. With the power of us Special Forces—” he answered distractedly, but at the same time, the atmosphere on the deck suddenly changed, and a bright color appeared in the corner of his eyes.

The color passed through the air lock on the opposite wall and appeared on the catwalk. The bright green uniform had golden embroidery around it, and she had a wine red cape draped on her. It was impossible to see her appearance from this place, but the presence she gave off was not something an ordinary officer could compare to. The profile matched the image of the young Mineva Lao Zabi he saw in the documentaries, and his body froze. “Oi, that’s…!” “Isn’t that Her Highness Mineva Zabi?” there were

similar buzzing occurring everywhere, causing the atmosphere on the deck to be shaken by the commotion.

The profile, ostensibly Mineva herself, ignored all the stares as she stepped on the catwalk. That delicate body was accompanied by Frontal's escort squad, and her cape fluttered in the air. There was a light lit on the mobile suit deck filled with furor, and Gilligan felt all anxiety in him disappear as he was basically touched when he saw that figure. Mineva passed by her comrades in Republic army's mantles, and went right at the hangar with the "Unicorn" on it. She saw the Federation soldiers dragged away without being able to do anything as they had guns pointed at them, and this embodiment of Zeonism was right in his vision—

"Sieg Zeon!"

The impulse in his heart surged out from his mouth in the form of words. Cheers immediately erupted, and many chants rang on the deck. Sieg Zeon, Sieg Zeon. The cheers of the Republic's soldiers immediately filled the mobile suit deck, shaking the " Nahel Argama". Gilligan believed that this wave would seep through space and reach all over the Earth Celestial sphere, becoming a power that beckons an awakening of a new age.

This is what I hoped for. The anxiety and uneasiness from before were swept apart, and he was driven with a thought that he could die whenever he could. The cheers of Sieg Zeon did not end for a short while, and the men, who found their refuge of pride, let their cheers echo through the air filling the deck.

Part 3

The fanatical cheers felt like a wall more than voices. It was a high overpowering wall that could not be harnessed by an individual's will, which would not cease without reaching its destination—

And Audrey simply crossed that wall nonchalantly and approached this place. That person dressed in formal Neo Zeon clothing, basked in cheers below her eyes, was not Audrey. To Banagher, that person was someone who took the appearance of Audrey and hid herself within; it was the appearance of a certain person called Mineva Zabi, someone he was unacquainted with.

The crew of the "Nahel Argama" was surrounded by the Republic soldiers cheering, and they stopped to look at Audrey—Mineva. The crew was slowly being moved to this mobile suit deck, and Banagher saw them separated into different platoons with their hands on their heads, their knees kneeling on the floor. The group of uniformed Republic soldiers had their automatic miniarms aimed at the Federation soldiers they held captive, shouting Sieg Zeon. Time felt like it reverted back to the old One Year Year, and Banagher felt goosebumps as he sensed that he was ostensibly thrown into a different timeline as he looked for Zinnerman amongst the countless faces on the deck.

He did not see Zinnerman ever since he was detained aboard the deck. Where was he? What sort of expression was he giving? Banagher looked around, but found no signs of the other man, and grabbed onto the railing tightly, only to suddenly sense a cold stare from behind.

He turned his head slightly, and saw the red uniform standing behind him. Full Frontal's masked face remained unmoved as he stood with his back facing the cockpit of the "Unicorn". It was impossible to tell if he was looking at Banagher as his eyes were sheltered by the light filter. It seemed that he had made contact with Zinnerman beforehand and brought the "Nahel Argama" into his dominion effortlessly. It was a chill Banagher had never seen before, of a completely different, one that gave an intuition that if anyone were to resist, he would act and take down his opponent without waiting for the escort squad beside him.

What sort of person is he? Banagher recalled the face with the mask removed he saw once on "Palau", but he still had an impression of the masked face itself, and at the same time, he felt the railing on the gondola tremble slightly. Mineva Zabi grabbed onto the same railing as she descended down the gondola, looking at the deck as her mantle flapped with the wind. The moment she raised her right hand, the chants of Sieg Zeon exploded into cheers , and formed a quake-like tremor that shook the gondola.

"Long live Your Highness Mineva!" "May glory descend upon the Zabi family!"Mineva looked around at the cheering soldiers, waited for their excitement to quell for a while, and then turned to look at Frontal behind her. *Audrey.* Banagher felt a voice in his heart calling out to her being deflected off and bouncing off the floor. He could only watch the side of that face that would not look at her. While the escort squad had their heels clasped together, Frontal stood in front of him, "It's perfect." and stepped forward.

"It's certainly worth bringing a change of clothes. The morale of the Republic's soldiers will rise now."

Frontal stated calmly as the smile on his lips was the only expression he had. “You certainly are well prepared.” Mineva answered coldly, her eyes showing disgust as she seemed to be looking at an enemy.”

“I heard that the Char Aznable that led Neo Zeon in the past did not like having people act as symbols, isn’t it?”

“The man called Char may be such, but I’m just doing what I feel I need to do. Did you not change your clothes because you understood this, Your Highness?”

“You’re treating me like a fool here. Your attitude is the reason why I left the “Sleeves”…but it’s useless to talk further.”

Since it already ended up like this. In response to Mineva’s unstated words, Frontal still showed a smile on his face as he answered, “I’m intimidated.” Mineva looked away from the masked face, and then looked at Banagher for a split moment, but she looked back at the deck before Banagher could see her expression clearly.

“But is this alright? There are ECOAS members amongst the captives. These aren’t opponents the inexperienced Republic’s soldiers can handle.”

“I left the Garencieres team to watch over ECOAS and the important members of the crew. Please do not worry.”

"Then why did you gather everyone on this mobile suit deck? With the Republic's ships supporting, you should be able to isolate and detain them separately."

"It's all according to the decision in our strategy. You do not have to worry, Your Highness."

"Strategy…to inquire about the final coordinates of the " Laplace Box"?"

The decisive voice caused the smile to disappear off Frontal's face. Banagher had switched off the generator before he was detained aboard the ship, so that the data of the Laplace Process would not be called out. Mineva knew this, but what would this have to do with gathering the hostages here? As he inadvertently looked at Mienva, he subconsciously realized the term 'hostage', and his vision turned dark.

No way. He was driven by this impulse to yell in his heart as he glared at Frontal. The mask that was covered with shivers remained unmoved, "You…!" and as he exclaimed and stepped forward, an arm reached from behind and cuffed his neck, causing his body to be lifted off the floor and pulled behind.

"I've been waiting for this moment, Banagher Links…!"

This voice numbed his skin, and his abdomen had a gun pointed at it. Angelo Sauper's voice felt just as moist as it was when he was following Frontal on "Palau". "We can't talk calmly here. Let's move somewhere else." Frontal said, and then

disappeared from his vision. Mineva answered back with her glance, and her face then turned over to give a glance. Her emerald eyes were showing a little bitterness, ostensibly wanting to tell him something, but was that an illusion? Banagher's windpipe was pressed halfway through as he let out a breathing voice, and he moved his hand in the air. His pressured nerves let out tears, and the back of Mineva got even blurry, causing him to feel regret.

Part 4

The mobile suit deck had the largest capacity inside the ship, and the ground space was the size of a school field. Even as 400 crew members were gathered here, it did not seem narrow, but it certainly felt abnormal to see so many people gathered in this place. At the end of its service, even if it was docked, this military ship would have people on duty, and there was no way all the crew could leave their areas—other than the moments when there was a huge hole that required evacuation from the ship, or when the ship was occupied by the enemy.

In fact, the method used by the Garencieres team was really superb. They started their raid on the armory the moment the Republic army began their assault, and took down all the important areas. There were no deaths simply because they were so fast that there was no chance of resistance. They probably checked through the inner workings of the "Nahel Argama" thoroughly through these 4 days, as well as its security. *Perhaps they offered the "Garencieres" to make us relax—or were Mineva Zabi's words all an act?* Otto's thoughts did not have focus as he suddenly felt hot in the head, and gritted his teeth as he looked at the "

Unicorn". He could only see the bottom of the gondola leaned at the side of the cockpit hatch at the abdomen, and he could not see Mineva's expression there as he saw the white machine swallow its secret from the edge of his captain's hat.

The "Sinanju" was standing beside the Red Comet, and its dazzling red armor reflected the spotlights shining onto the deck. The purple mobile suit that seemed to be the unit of the escort squad leader brought back the two "Lotos" from the L1 Junction, and parked its bulky machine at the wall right in front of the aft. The machine that had the curves of petals had the same sense of design as the 4-winged placed in the maintenance deck below—the "Kshatriya". It stood with the Republic army's "Hizacks", and this was practically an exhibition of Zeonic mobile suits.

The crew gathered at the feet was assorted into platoons of 20, and they were forced to kneel on the floor. Each squad had 2 Republic soldiers watching over them, while the ones watching over Otto and the important crew members were the ones from the Garencieres team. Of course, their index fingers were placed upon the safeties of the Sub machine guns. Otto saw Flaste's unfaltering expression, and sighed as he turned to the partition wall at the aft end.

Conroy and the ECOAS that were brought off the "Lotos" had guns pointing at them from front and back as they approached. All of them were moving unsteadily, probably because their hands were tied behind their backs, and as they were in zero gravity, they would have to move with the magnets on the boots.

"That's weird."

Liam, who knelt down beside Otto, whispered to him softly. The latter looked over at her.

"To think that the ECOAS would be imprisoned here with us… it's not a good idea for them to gather us all in a single place. Logically, it'll be best to separate us to prevent us from colluding."

She let out a choking voice at the end, and lowered her face that seemed to be enduring the pain. They were in zero gravity, but blood fluctuation would not be smooth if they were to keep putting their hands on their heads, and there was a gunshot wound under the plaster slapped on her shoulder. "Does it hurt?" Otto asked softly, "The wound isn't much." And Liam answered quickly.

"But my body just feels like it's breaking. I'm feeling really peeved inside."

Otto recalled the side of her face when she yelled at the Garencieres team for being shameless and charged right at them when they stepped into the bridge. The bullet merely grazed her shoulder, and Otto felt more fortunate than her in this sense. If there were deaths in the crew, he had no belief that he could remain sane as a Captain. "Don't talk, you know." Otto cringed his neck upon hearing the voice of the watchman, and then stared at the expressions of the crew he could see. It had been 2 hours since the occupations started, and no one had lost their cool yet, but nobody knew what would happen after this. Otto thought that it

was time to ask about what the enemy was planning to do, and the moment he looked past his subordinates and stared at Flaste's face, the latter looked behind Otto.

Otto looked behind, and saw Zinnerman dragging his leather jacket in the air. He passed by Otto and company from above, knelt down and landed splendidly, "I'll leave the bridge to you." He told Flaste, who nodded, and once the latter left the airlock, Zinnerman turned his expressionless stare back at him.

"Each group is to have a representative. Those who wants to head to the bathroom or is feeling unwell will have to raise it to the invigilators through the representative. Also, if anything happens, the representative will have to bear responsibility."

He said monotonously, seemingly reciting a message. It seemed that the other groups had the same explanation as a few voices rang. "I suppose the representative here will be Captain Otto?" Zinnerman continued, and Otto glared back, but the former did not look at him. "The Neo Zeon fleet will reach us soon." He continued,

"You shall be our prisoner from now on, and you'll receive proper treatment. As long as you don't resist, your lives will be assured. You are to obey our instructions until the fleet arrives—"

"Traitor."

A voice came from someone, and Zinnerman closed his mouth as he was interrupted. Otto sensed the presence of the watchman raising the sub machine gun, and resisted to shout and turn to the

person who called out. With everyone looking at her, Mihiro, who was on her knees, turned her upper body up, and glared at Zinnerman with an expression befitting her mini-tank nickname.

"It's not like we fully trusted you, but Banagher did. Do you understand now? You betrayed the one person you shouldn't have betrayed. That's—"

Zinnerman remained silent as he merely drew his handgun from his waist, ceasing all words that followed. "Don't move!" the watchman's voice rang, stopping Otto from getting up. Otto put his hands on his head again as he looked at Zinnerman, pointing his gun at Mihiro. *If he dares to squeeze the trigger, I'll bite his throat off even if I'm going to be riddled with bullets.* After a serious exchange of glances for several seconds, Zinnerman put down his gun and placed it back into his holster as nonchalantly as when he drew it.

"Trust is just like a gamble."

He lowered his head and muttered. The emotion that appeared in his eyes caused Otto to look at him with observant eyes.

"The result of a gamble is that the gambler has to pay the price. This is the rule, no matter how unreasonable it is."

ZInnerman lifted his head, and he showed the expression of a hardened soldier with all feelings wiped away. "This…!" Mihiro sounded agitated, but Otto stopped her with a hand signal, and then met Zinnerman in the eyes. "We'll obey the rules, definitely." On hearing this, Zinnerman's large eyebrows twitched.

"But he hasn't admitted defeat yet, right?"

Otto turned his sights to the "Unicorn" at the bow side's partition wall. Zinnerman stopped himself from turning his head, and his expression showed signs of wavering as he looked back. " Let's hope that both sides won't have any casualties again." Zinnerman muttered and turned away to leave, but Otto did not look at him as he stared at the gondola beside the "Unicorn" deck. He saw Mineva and Banagher follow behind Frontal's red uniform as the latter floated in the air, ostensibly wanting to move somewhere else as they went to the aft.

Part 5

The masked man leapt off the gondola and started to float around in space; though he was in front of them, he felt so unrealistic. He looked like Char during the One Year War, and the uncanny resemblance was such that he was ostensibly brought alive from a documentary. Takuya Irei's eyes were subconsciously attracted by this, and then saw Mineva leap off the gondola, followed by Banagher's white pilot suit. The Neo Zeon pilot sticking to Banagher from behind was most probably Full Frontal's escort team.

That hand was holding onto a recoilless handgun as it was aimed at Banagher, who was moving in front. The black hole of the barrel was leading to a hole of empty darkness. A shot from it could wipe off a person's life and turn the body into must. The terror of a Garencieres crew member aiming his gun at a person appeared in Takuya's mind clearly again, and he clenched his trembling fist.

He had been living in a ship on active combat service for a month, and thought that he had more or less grew some guts in him, but the terror of being pointed at with a gun was another thing altogether. His body, which was already used to fighting back at AEIC, was unable to move due to fear. If not for the fact that they were in zero gravity, his legs would have collapsed, and he could have knelt down on the floor if the enemy told him to do so. The gun that was transferred to him together with antagonistic intent had such power; this little hole could remove him from the human world, and this unreasonable and cruel logic numbed his mind as he could not help but think of anything other than death.

Is that guy alright? He looked towards the group of people moving towards them slightly, "Banagher…" and immediately turned his head aside the moment he heard this weak voice. Micott did not notice his stare as she continued to look on at the white pilot suit approaching her. Haro, which was in her lap, remained silent as it could not sense its own approaching, making things unbearable. The Republic soldiers demanded that it was either to be confiscated, or to be shut down, and they naturally chose the latter.

Takuya may be rather open-minded about this, but Micott still had some affections for Banagher. She knew that this was unrequited, but she continued to live through this situation with such feelings. *And what am I doing now?*

To Banagher now, Micott and I are just two out of the 400 people on board the deck. We can't rely on the adults around us, and Micott has to rely on me for support, but I can't say anything that can make her relax. I

'm trying using up all my strength just to support myself, looking at Banagher aimlessly—and putting my hopes in him. He felt gutless because of this, and bit his lips as a result. "Oi, Takuya." At that moment, a hushed voice rang at his ears, and his heart throbbed in shock.

"I'll create some commotion. Once I give you the signal, run to the hatch nearby."

It was the voice of Jona Gibney. This man was the most experienced of all the mechanics, and was the representative of Takuya's group as the mechanics were divided into three platoons. Takuya consciously turned his head around, "Don't turn your head!" but a roar turned his tense face forward. He rolled his eyes to check the movements of the invigilators, "What do you intend to do?" he asked softly,

"They'll pass by above us. I'll get the Princess as a hostage, so use this opening to run to the Bow Thrusters engine room."

"No way…! You're get killed!"

"Those guys from Zeon view that Princess as the star of their hope. We can more or less buy some time here. Those guys from Zeon are all rookies."

The invigilators were in pairs, and after every 30 minutes, one of the two would switch around. However, all of them were young and nervous. Mineva, who was approaching from above, would attract their attention to a point where they could not see two people whispering to each other. To Takuya, they looked like

rookies too. “Do you know how to operate the Bow Bhrusters manually?”Gibney continued, and Takuya instinctively nodded its head.

“The thrust it creates will present ECOAS a chance to counterattack. You’re not a formal crew member, and it’s possible for you to sneak away even if you’re missing.”

“But…”

“We won’t know what’ll happen when we become Zeon prisoners. Can you endure seeing her being treated as a plaything?”

Takuya’s shoulders jerked slightly, and he looked at Micott sidelong. The latter probably realized his presence as she showed an uneasy expression on her face as she looked back, causing him to look away.

Banagher can’t deal with that much now, Gibney and the rest don’t have the time to care about such stuff. I’m the only one who can take care of Micott—he felt the burden Micott brought as she started to rely on him unconsciously for the past month, glanced at Gibney, and decided to take action. Gibney patted him on the shoulder and left from the back. The tense atmosphere of the mechanics around them reached Takuya, and it seemed that they were ready for this. “Takuya…” in the midst of this tense atmosphere, Takuya tried to look for an opening, and Micott looked at him with a nervous expression.

“I’ll be fine. Don’t move.”

"Don't be reckless. We're not soldiers here."

"But Banagher isn't…don't worry, at least I can protect you."

He did not look at Micott, who gasped for a short moment, and saw that the closest airlock was about 30m away. *They probably think that we can't do anything just by breaking off our link with the higher-ups. There's no decent invigilation here, and the enemy doesn't have the manpower needed to keep a close eye on everyone in the ship. Once I leave the mobile suit deck, I'll find a way; it'll be fine.* He tried to convince himself in his worried heart, "Erm, sorry, but I need the toilet…" a mechanic spoke up, causing Takuya's shoulders to jerk.

It began. "I told you that the representative is to say it." The Republic soldier answered with an adamant voice. "Ye-yes, what's the matter now?" Gibney got up while pretending to play dumb, and the Red Comet and the rest were about to pass by from above. "DON'T YOU STAND UP RANDOMLY!" the roaring soldier focused his attention on Gibney, while the other soldier was distracted by this commotion. At this time, the mechanics got into action,

Many hands quickly got into action to cover the mouths of the Republic soldiers, grab their automatic rifles, and pull them to the floor. Gibney too got up and knocked into Mineva who was around 10m above him. Frontal, who was leading the procession, turned his head around, while Banagher and the escort squad seemed dumbfounded as they panicked. "Hurry up and go!" However, Takuya did not have the time to check as someone's deep growl prompted him, and he kicked the floor in a dazed manner.

"Takuya…!" he turned his back on Micott, who cried out with a hushed voice, and let his body float to the airlock. "Don't shoot!" " Her Highness…!?" Takuya sensed the numerous voices, and the sudden noisy atmosphere of the deck pricked his skin as he gritted his teeth and focused on the door in front of his eyes. He thought he stepped off the floor with all his strength, but his body was not moving as fast as he though. He floated away at a distance not too far from the floor, and was about to touch the hangar in front of the airlock, but a gunshot caused him to miss his footing off the hangar.

He turned his body around, and the scene on the mobile suit deck appeared in his eyes. He saw many frozen figures, and the color of blood sprayed in the air caused his mind to turn blank.

The blood was wriggling like amoeba between Banagher and Mineva, who were showing shocked expressions. The trail of blood from Gibney's head formed a reddish-brown stain that appeared in the wide space. The blood trail split apart to form blobs of all sizes, and Gibney's body lost half its head, letting out blood as he spun in the air. On the other size, the man holding the handgun that was giving off smoke was—

"YOU BASTARD…!"

The sudden roar caused the time that stood still to crack. Full Frontal glanced at Captain Otto, who was restrained by the invigilator as he wanted to get close, and put the handgun that killed Gibney back into the holster. This action seemed like a code that caused many frozen figures to move. "Mechanic officer…!" "

Petty Officer Gibney was…!?" The wails of the crew rang together with the call from the Republic soldiers, "Don't you move! Anyone that moves will be shot!" There was a scream that came a moment later, *Is that Micott?* The moment Takuya thought of this, several Republic soldiers closed in on him and held down his floating body.

What happened next felt like a dream. Takuya felt pain in his twisted arm, but it was only a distant feeling. As he could not move a single finger, the scenery in front of him started to move. The inertia of the gunshot floated in the air, and Gibney's corpse hit the wall with a heavy thud. "DON'T LEAVE YOUR DESIGNATED AREA!" "TELL SOMEONE TO BRING A BODY BAG!" The hollering Republic soldiers and the added invigilators pointed their guns at the kneeling mechanics. These figures passed by his vision, and Micott's face was the only thing that explained everything. She hugged Takuya without saying anything, bringing him to some levels of normalcy. *Looks like I'm back to square one,* Takuya thought in his blank mind, and he looked over Micott's shoulders and up at the scene above him.

Gibney's blood was still floating in mid-air, and Banagher was held back by the escort squad from behind. "THERE'S NO NEED TO KILL HIM, RIGHT!? THERE ISN'T…!" the moment he shouted out, Mineva stood in the air, clenching her fist, "Are you hurt anywhere, Princess…?" and she did not look at the soldier asking her as he approached. "Deal with the body properly." Frontal said, and the expression from her face vanished after she took a deep breath. She told the soldiers to back down, and descended to where they were.

The expression that was filled with an adamant will met his, and his dreamlike membrane was completely ripped off. It seemed that Micott sensed the abnormal atmosphere as she pushed her body away from Takuya and looked up. “Princess, you mustn’t!” However, Mineva ignored the loud plea from the soldier as she looked down at Takuya and Micott.

She looked around at the mechanics who were giving her hostile looks as the Republic soldiers pointed guns at them, and met Takuya in the eyes again. “This is really an unfortunate accident.” She let out a cold voice, causing Takuya to blink his dazed eyes.

“The same action will only lead to the same outcome. Please choose your actions well. After saying that, Mineva reached her hand out. “Princess! You mustn’t reach your royal hand out like that…!” a soldier exclaimed from above, and Takuya, who looked at the outstretched hand, was about to hold it back, “As expected, you’re…!” but Micott’s voice caused his heart to jolt.

“YOU’RE AN ACCOMPLICE OF THOSE MURDERERS!”

Micott stood up and swung a hand at Mineva’s hands. Their bodies crashed into each other at this moment, “YOU!” before the soldiers above shouted, the Republic soldiers showed a marked change in expressions as they charged over. Before they could reach their hands out, Takuya grabbed Micott by the waist. Micott’s momentum as she left Mineva caused the duo to float in the air, and the mechanics formed a human wall to block them as he held

his breath to cover her. “What accident! How is it…!” Takuya cried out in tears, and though he took a few punches from the struggling Micott, he let his body tense up as he covered this life in his arms.

“You bastards, move aside!” “There’s a limit to your insolence! Hand over that woman!” several Republic soldiers growled as they reached their hands out. “What are you saying when you killed Chief Mechanic Gibney!” “You’re the ones that got careless!” The mechanics hollered back, and at the apex of their argument, “ Alright, that’s enough.” Mineva’s stern and regal voice rang.

“But…!”

“We deserve to be hit for what we did. Let’s go!”

She glanced over to them with her hand on her cheek, and there was a hidden meaning in that action. Once he saw Mineva kick the floor and float up, Takuya turned to look at the sobbing Micott. He could see the Republic soldiers sulk and leave, and brought his mouth to her ears, “Calm down, Micott.” He quickly said with a hushed voice.

“Just endure this for now. Look at your right pocket too.”

Micott’s drenched eyes widneed, and she separated from Takuya, ostensibly pushing him away. There should be no doubts about this; she hid something in her hand wanted to hand us something. The moment she scuffled with Micott, Mineva stuffed something into her chest pocket. *“Check it later.” Takuya warned Micott, who was inadvertently about to take it out, and lifted his head slightly to see Mineva laving.*

I don't know how to deal with this situation, but I had to be careful with what she gave us. This thought injected life into his fear-riddled body. He pulled the half-believing Micott close to him and hugged her shoulders. The bloody smell that was filled with the stench of grease told him how important this warmth that reached his hands was.

Part 6

Gibney's blood became irregular blobs that floated in the air, and floated up before disappearing due to the currents from the air purifier system. Some blood remained on the metal bars of the hangar, on the mobile suit deck that was practically his life, leaving behind a scar that could not be erased.

There was no hesitation at all—Banagher recalled the technique Frontal used to shoot through Gibney's skull, and glared at the back in front of him. Did he do it instinctively because of the incoming danger on Mineva? Did he believe that he had enough skill to shoot Gibney? Most likely not. Frontal never considered Mineva's life right from the beginning, and if that was not the case, he would not have fired without hesitation.

Gibney's corpse was already contained in the body bag, and was being transported out of the deck by the Republic soldiers. Banagher looked afar at the black bag that was expanded into a human shape, and blankly wondered what kind of person that man was when he was alive. He did not have a chance to talk with the man slowly, but his skills and instincts as a mechanic were top-notch. From Takuya and Micott's response, one could imagine

that he was the kind of person who was very caring of others. Could those two remain calm now that things had become like this ? Banagher looked down at Takuya and the rest below him; it had been a while since her scuffle with Mineva ended, but Micott did not look up. Takuya was beside her, clutching her shoulders.

Rage rose in him, and he had no way of venting them out. A ripping pain spread through his body. If he had not brought Zinnerman along, events would not have developed till this extent. Gibney would not have died, and those two would not be so terrified. Maybe there would be a different situation if he had taken Mineva as hostage…? Banagher floated listlessly as he was bound down by the bloody mess that could not be salvaged any further. “Don’t dily-daly.” Angelo growled as he twisted Banagher ’s arm from behind and poked his gun at the back.

“Don’t give us any more trouble. The fates of the people here will all depend on your attitude.”

He ostensibly felt a blade, and the icy feeling was finally resting at his neck. Angelo looked back at Banagher, who consciously looked back, “You understand now, right? There’s a reason why we gathered the prisoners here.” His lips curled up,

“If you refuse to help us, we’ll release the air on this mobile suit deck.”

Banagher was already prepared, but the feeling of the blade pressed at his throat still hurt. Angelo continued to press it on the trembling Banagher, “Don’t think this is a mere threat.” He said to the latter’s ears.

"We follow up on what we say. If you don't want them to suffocate, tell us the final coordinates of the "Box"."

Angelo's bloodshot eyes were looking back at Banagher, and there were more than 400 people who were not dressed in normal suits. Banagher's body lost all life for sure this time as he let his numb body and mind drift amidst the mobile suit deck.

Part 7

It had been 5 minutes since the command for the entire crew to stand guard against the acceleration was given. The "General Revil " continued to accelerate, and Riddhe was at the aft, where all the air was packed towards, in the middle of this uncomfortable G force. He held onto the abnormal weight of the lift grip as he hurriedly passed through the long corridor. The lift grip at maximum speed reached its final destination, and he used the momentum to let the body float and reach the door of the bridge.

The "General Revil" was the largest cruiser of the Federation space army, but the bridge was not that ridiculously big. There were many mobile suit decks, so there were more operators on duty, and there were more monitors on the wall that even extended towards the ceiling; this would be the extent of its characteristic. Riddhe accepted the salute of the officer at the door and barged into the bridge. Captain Maseki looked behind to see the pitch black pilot charge in, looking completely lost; however, Riddhe did not look back as he approached that stout profile sitting at the commander seat. Before Alberto, who was tapped on the shoulder, could turn behind, "Uniform 007, path's clear. Please

launch." Riddhe heard the operator say this, (Roger that) and a familiar voice rang through the wireless communicator.

(Nigel Garrett, U007, launching.)

The tremors from the bow of the catapult would not reach the bridge that was several hundred meters away. However, the jet flares of the "Jesta" that was launched could be seen clearly at the front. Before Nigel's unit could light its thrusters in vacuum and make contact with the Base Jabber, (U008, ready for launch.) " Roger that, clearing course…) Daryl's voice rang through the communicator, and once the operator's voice rang, "What's going on now!?" Riddhe grabbed Alberto by the shoulder and asked.

"We spotted a flash from a battle at the 'L1 Junction'. It may have something to do with the "Nahel Argama"."

Alberto made a glance at Riddhe, and turned forward again. Maseki, who was seated on the Captain's seat beside them, was giving a questioning look with his eyes, asking who the person was, but Alberto did not respond as his slightly swollen face continued to look at the front.

"Even if we race there at maximum battle speed, the "General Revil" will only reach there half a day later. That's why I got the Tri-Stars to head out first and check it out."

"WHY NOT ME!?"

The sudden roar echoed, and it seemed that the cadres on the bridge were all looking at him. (Watts Stepney, U009, launching!)

with the voice ringing through the communicator in the background, Riddhe continued to glare at Alberto.

Nobody told him that the acceleration was beginning. Even if there was a patrol rotation, Alberto should be able to use his authority to interfere. Alberto stared back at Riddhe, who was venting his complaints wordlessly, “Don’t be so loud!” and hissed. He looked at Maseki, who pricked his ears, left the commander seat, and brought Riddhe to the back to the bridge.

“It may not be the “Nahel Argama”. I told the Tri-Stars to launch because they’re not part of the original forces here. Just wait for Lieutenant Nigel’s report.”

“The “Banshee” is also not in the standard team. If you need to scout it, I too can—”

“What can you do when you can’t pilot the machine well? And can you work together with the Tri-Stars well?”

Alberto had witnessed Riddhe’s altercation with Nigel, and was at a loss of what to reply. “It won’t be beneficial to have the “ Banshee” carry out battle for a long time.” He left from beside Riddhe, and quipped,

“Once the moment arrives, I want you to leave even if you don’t want to. Save your strength before that…and the atmosphere’s weird too.”

Alberto glanced at the main screen at the front and added on with a hushed voice. “Weird?” Riddhe repeated as he looked over at where Alberto was looking.

“There’s a ship that looks like the “Nahel Argama” and two others. Their affiliation is unknown because their signals vanished, but they haven’t been doing anything once the battle ended, just sticking beside the ‘L1 Junction’.”

The unknown ship markers shown on the screen were clearly not moving. The three markers were not showing any signs to indicate if they were friend or foe, but they were practically packed together and moving at the same velocity, overlapping the point that’s indicated as the ‘L1 Junction’. It seemed that they were jammed into the center of the Lagrange Point, the center of gravity between the Earth and the Moon.

“Something happened, but what…”

Alberto muttered as he looked at the 3 coordinates. The unknown anxiety spread across as Riddhe looked up at the screen too.

Part 8

In the ship that was devoid of people, the sounds of engines were the only things that could be heard. It had been approximately 2 hours after the occupation, but even the air felt foreign.

Of course, the Captain's room in a corner of the gravity block was no exception. In this place that was filled with cold and silent air, Banagher, Mineva, Angelo and the red profile of Frontal were present. They were led here by the Garencieres team, and Frontal chose a place where they could talk quietly, the waiting room leading to the Captain's room. The 4 cups of coffee were still giving off hot air, but nobody touched them. The positions of the captors and the captives were of no relation to the quartet present, and a short moment of silence descended upon them as their bodies sank in the gravity as time passed.

It had been a long time since he once met Daguza face to face. The bland instant coffee aroma spread around the room, replacing the fragrance of the red tea Otto prided himself in the last time Banagher took a drink from it. He let his body sink into the sofa and looked at the back of Frontal, who did not sit as he merely looked at the landscape painting, still giving off a presence that was not of a human. Perhaps the chilling atmosphere in this ship was a result of this man's arrival.

"What Lieutenant Angelo said is the truth. We're taking the crew of this entire ship as hostages."

Frontal seemed to have detected Banagher's stare as he did not move while saying. Did Angelo tell him of this, or that he sensed that Angelo mentioned this before? Banagher was unable to tell as he wordlessly looked back.

"But it's not my intention to use hostages as shields to force you . You do have talent."

He turned around abruptly, and the stare from the mask remained unmoved. The anti-glare filter reflected a strong dazzling light, and Banagher, who was sitting on the sofa, tensed up.

"It's a talent we need. No matter what path you take after that, it'll be a waste to see a world dominated by the Federation bury such talent."

The hand with the white glove on it reached for the mask and took it off. The lush blond hair let out a flowing sound that overlapped with Mineva's breath, and Angelo, who took a step forward, let out a faltering breath. Banagher exerted strength into his abdomen as he looked at the face which had its mask removed.

"Will you assist me, Banagher Links? You have more worth than what you imagine yourself to be of."

The blue exposed eyes had an expression that was reading into other people's hearts as it looked right back at him. *He's not talking about 'us', but 'me',* this explanation caused Banagher to feel an unexpected weight, and he looked down at his clenched fists. He glanced at the glaring Angelo, and then looked at the overly handsome face in front of him, "…Why did you kill Mr Gibney?" he eked out these wods.

"Your ability alone can restrict his actions even if you don't kill him."

"You should be able to understand, right?"

The poker face was just like how it was with the mask on, and it was impossible to see what sort of expression Frontal was giving. " Make an example of others, am I correct?" Banagher immediately answered, "That's right." Frontal looked down at the former and showed a thin smile.

"This is the talent I said of you, to see through others like this."

"This is the talent of a killer, not a Newtype ability under Zeon Deikun's definition."

Banagher forgot the pressure surrounding him for a short moment. "Who do you think you're talking to, kid…!" Angelo growled and reached his arm out before Frontal could reply, and grabbed Banagher by the collar.

"What the Captain is saying is the responsibility that comes with the ability. What do you think will happen if that mechanic's still alive? There'll be more of the same things happening, and more sacrifices will be made. Those who have the ability to see the future have the duty and responsibility to deal with such things coldly."

Even in low gravity, the arm strength to raise Banagher's weight with one arm was not to be underestimated. The expression was filled with personal emotions, a stark contrast to the words that were just said, and Banagher felt a suffocating fear.

"You're just running away from this responsibility, a fool who haven't realized it at all."

"I know that…! But so what about those people who think that they can see the future? They're just like the dictators of the past or Char who threw an asteroid down onto Earth, it's just a contest of who kills more here, right? My father who wanted to hand the " Laplace Box" to Newtypes…Cardeas Vist may be of the same kind as them!"

The strength disappeared from Angelo's hand, "Father…?" and a surprised voice came out from his mouth. Banagher shook his hand off, stood up while staggering, and turned his stare at Frontal , who did not twitch his eyebrows in the slightest. "So if there's really such a power, I have to be careful. I can't just fall into despair myself; I need to find a way for everyone to coexist together—"

The door suddenly opened, causing Banagher to swallow the latter half of his words.

Zinnerman opened the door, stopped for a moment as everyone looked at him, and stepped into the room. He did not look at anyone, and his bearded face gave off a familiar odor; Banagher stood at where he was as he turned his face away. He had been concerned about something all this while, but the moment Zinnerman appeared, he was unable to say anything. There was a voice bellowing in him, telling him that it was useless of him to say this. The word despair felt so clear in him, and he felt the knees that were supporting him in his resistance against Frontal lose strength.

Did Char, Father, threw the asteroid down to Earth and wanted to open the "Box", the source of this conflict because they felt endless

despair? He was shocked by this thought flashing through his mind , and was unable to find anything to argue back as he slumped into the sofa. With his back facing Mineva diagonally, ZInnerman looked at a corner of the room with all emotions gone from his eyes; Banagher again clenched his fists.

"…Anyway, I have no intention of helping Neo Zeon. If there's a responsibility, it's mine since I'm entrusted with the "Box"."

"But we can say that since you say so, the hostages will lose their lives. What will you say about that?"

Frontal turned the old scar on his forehead as he answered. Banagher lowered his head.

"Your self-righteousness will kill many people. The outcome here will mean that you're doing no different from Char and your father, right?"

The steady voice felt like a silk rope that was slightly choking his body and mind. If there were a devil in this world, perhaps this would be the voice he uses to mutter. Banagher was shocked by the blue eyes that were terrifyingly silent, and bit his lips as he could not argue back. "That's enough of your act here, Captain Frontal." However, an interrupting voice caused him to gasp.

"You want to ask me, right? Where the "Box" is."

Mineva got up from her single-seat sofa and stared at Frontal's face as she said this. The face that had been out of Banagher's consciousness up till this point caused his sweaty fists to cringe as it forced itself inside his sights.

"Just ask honestly. It's an indulgent act to try and actually make that boy speak for himself."

She waved her arm, ostensibly not wanting the other man to argue back, and moved her knees and cape. The sweet aroma that floated by felt just like the one Banagher had a whiff of when their lips were close together in the cockpit. "I know where the final location of the "Box" is." He blinked as Mineva said that, and though he knew, his heart jolted.

"I was in the "Unicorn" cockpit too, so I witnessed it personally. "

"About that…if you were willing to tell us, you could have avoided all unnecessary sacrifices, right?"

Angelo stood about as he spaced out, but Frontal ignored him as he let out a surprised voice. Mineva saw Zinnerman move his eyes, and looked back at Frontal, "But I have a condition." And said with a cold voice.

"What do you want to do with the "Laplace Box" once you get it? I want to hear your opinion on this."

"Say it here, is it?"

"Right. Before you continue however, I don't want to hear any rotten saying like reviving Zeon. The man who built relationships with the Zeon government and launched operations before the return of self-autonomy isn't that simple."

Once she finished saying this, Mineva showed a glint of straightforwardness in her eyes, a cruelty that made her different from her identity as Audrey. Banagher heard the throbbing in his chest and looked at Frontal. The face that was looking back at Mineva showed a human-like moment of hesitation on his face, " Alright." He answered, turned to Mineva, but…

"However."

Mineva immediately stopped him, passed by the front of the red uniform, and walked towards the communication panel on the wall. She proceeded to operate it and pressed the phone button at the bottom. "The conversation here will be leaked out to the ship." She said as she turned to Frontal,

"Please say your real motive, Captain. If you really have conviction, how about you let the Republic soldiers hear it out?"

"This will also reach the ears of the Federation soldiers, and their freedom in the future will be heavily restricted as a result, you know?"

"They're prisoners either way. If you really have such a belief in your values, Captain, someone may be willing to help you."

It seemed that a sharp exchange of words was under way. Frontal saw that Mineva kept her poker face, and lowered his face. Banagher saw him, with both Angelo and Zinnerman looking, focus his blue eyes in space, and started saying while ostensibly not looking at this place,

"The Space Migrant Independence Plan up till this point is determined by the Federation's willingness to grant self-governance. Without looking at the example of the One Year War, we can be certain that the Federation will definitely not agree with this. Then, there's no need to wait for their approval. It is my opinion that we ignore them."

Part 9

(Ignore…?)

(Besides me, Defense Minister Monaghan Baharov of the Republic too has the same idea. Why will the Federation not agree to the independence of Spacenoids? It's because Spacenoids are people who are abandoned in space. They feel that those are the descendents of those people who aren't needed to Earth, people who are inferior to them. The people inferior to them are calling for their independence, wanting to be of equal standing to them, and selfishly insist that staying on Earth is a crime. The Federation government comprised of Earthnoids will naturally not agree to such insistences because they knew that once they accept it, Spacenoids would not simply be of equal standing, but may even lose the initiative.)

The sudden broadcast in the ship caused every single person to lift their heads. “What?” “Isn’t that the voice of the Red Comet?” The crew murmured to each other, and voices were overlapping, causing the ripples of wavering to spread amongst them. Otto, whose mind had been frozen in place ever since Petty Officer Gibney was killed, had a weak electric pulse in his mind as he looked at the invigilators around them.

There were some Republic soldiers looking blankly into the mobile suit deck or looking at each other; the Garencieres team too was using the wireless communicator to make contact. Upon seeing their doubtful expressions, he exchanged surprised looks with Liam, and then heard Frontal’s voice,

(The reason is simple. The current Earth Celestial Sphere can’t be established without Spacenoids. Energy, food, all economic activity is established by the 7 Sides and the Moon. In fact, the self-reliance can’t support the 2 billion Earthnoids. In contrast, Spacenoids are self-sufficient even if they break away from Earth.)

The one who could conclude this as truth, this magical voice certainly belonged to Full Frontal. Upon hearing that voice that sounded just like the real Char, *What is this for?* Otto wondered. “It seems this broadcast’s completely unexpected to the Zeon people as well.” Another voice stunned him. Conroy, who got over unknowingly, showed his face from behind.

The members of ECOAS were gathered 10m away from the cadres. Conroy, who probably snuck over to them while the invigilators were not paying attention, did not give off any presence as he did not undo the restrain tied on his hands. Upon

recalling their nickname as Manhunters, Otto suppressed the chill in his heart, watched the stare from the invigilators, and turned his head forward. “That’s too reckless...” he said with his back facing the other man. “Now’s a good chance.” Conroy answered with a hushed voice.

(The Federation will limit the authority the Spacenoids have and establish their authorities over the Side leaders, probably because they’re afraid of this truth. If all the Sides unit with each other, Earth will become a countryside that is without economic value. It will become a city with the shell of the Central Government, one without any sense of trustworthiness, a king going about naked. Zeon Deikun probably used this fact as a weapon. Once all the Sides unite together, establish an economic agreement, and exclude Earth, the Federation government will have no standing. He however was an outstanding thinker, and not a politician. The Zabi family is the same, twisting Zeonism and started a war of independence because of this. They never thought of the premise that the Federation had to recognize their independence, and can only use force to challenge.)

The nonchalant voice continued, and caused the Republic soldiers and the Gareniceres team to falter. Otto saw the invigilators focus on the wireless communicator and not look at them, and stealthily leaned his body over to Conroy. He saw the hands that were tied down by the metal wire, and deduced that it would be difficult to remove it. “You can’t undo it?” he asked quietly. “I can’t do it without a tool.” Conroy quickly whispered back.

(It's the same for the two Neo Zeon Wars. As long as we don't give up on making others recognize our existence, there will be no day of victory in our battle against the Federation. The Spacenoids has a huge weapon in that it supports the Earth Celestial Sphere's economy. The reason why the Federation deliberately lets us " Sleeves" escape is because they need us to keep the gear called the military requirement running, and this is proof that the Earth economy alone is insufficient.)

Upon hearing this voice, "How radical." Conroiy whispered. Otto looked over his shoulder to stare at the other man's face.

"Those guys on the Garencieres are supporting the Zabi family, right? He actually denies thenm so firmly…they look like this is the first time they're hearing this."

Otto recalled that the invigilator calling through the wireless was Tomura. He then looked at Alec, who was holding a submachine gun as he looked up, not knowing what to do. "This is really a chilling thing to hear as a Federation person." He honestly answered. The thought to use an economic war to strangle the Federation by the neck was something the battle for Zeonism never had in the past, and though it was easier said than done, it was certainly a more realistic plan than using violence.

"But there's no warmth."

Liam, who had been listening quietly, suddenly spoke up. Otto and Conroy looked at her in unison.

"While he's talking about their future, he seems really cold and aloof. He sounds like a researcher observing an insect's hive… what history does this man called Frontal have? He's called the Second Coming of Char, but where is he from, and where is he headed to?"

Liam was not seriously asking as she looked into space, ostensibly facing a ghost. The chilly atmosphere spread around, and Otto focused on this overly calm voice. This cold voice ignored the faltering in the ship, and did not sound like a human as it rang through the tall ceilings of the mobile suit deck. The voice of the Second Coming of Char; the voice of someone who would kill his subordinates without hesitation—

(We'll strengthen the relationship of the Moon and the 7 sides, and fully exclude the center, forming a donut-shaped economic ring, a co-prosperity ring built around the Sides. As long as we don't ask for Self-independence, the Federation will not pay too much attention to the interactions between the Spacenoids. With the lead of the enterprises, each Sides will continue to build clauses and agreements that don't seem to have any problems on first glance. After that, we'll build a united ring with common diplomacy and security measures…)

Part 10

(Of course, this isn't something that can be accomplished in a day. Even if we aim to ally together, we need the existence of a leader.)

(And this is where the Zeon Republic comes in…Monaghan Baharov, right?)

A gentle woman's voice answered in response to the cold man's voice. Takuya knew that it was Mineva's voice, and was driven by his throbbing heart as he lift his head.

(I don't know if Minister Monaghan has any leadership qualities, but it was his proposal to have a Side co-prosperity ring, and only the Zeon Republic can form the basis of this. Perhaps quite a few people will feel repulsed by the name of Zeon, but Minister Baharov and I don't care about it. The important thing is to create a united body that allows the Spacenoids to fight against the Federation. The entrepreneurs and investors who are unhappy about Earth's squeezing system will most probably volunteer to assist once there is an opportunity.)

He heard the voice that continued on in a half-conscious manner, and held onto the paper that was drenched in sweat. The paper that had a few words scribbled on it was the thing stuffed into Micott's pocket during the commotion. He looked at the invigilators who were unable to calm down as they look at the ceiling, whispering to each other. "What do we do?" Takuya whispered. "I think we can trust her." Micott brought her face from close by and whispered.

"It's too unnatural, especially since she deliberately made her way to us."

"Maybe it's some trap?"

"There's no benefit for her to do such a thing to us, right? I know this well."

The strangely convicted words caused Takuya to glance at the side of Micott's face. She showed calm after exposing her emotions , and looked afar at a corner in space.

"A woman's lie is different from a man; it will sting. She's serious."

Takuya was overwhelmed by the terrifyingly serious expression , and he looked to the front. Once he confirmed the feeling of a paper only Micott and he knew of, he repeated the words written on it, and lowered his stare at the stain on the floor.

Gibney's blood was lying on the floor in a thumb-sized stain, a stain that could not be erased, that was prompting him to remain alert and calm. Even if he wanted to do so, he would have to act cautiously. He would first have to look for help. He looked around to see the depressed looking mechanics, fearful because of Gibney' s death. Once he saw that they would not do, he looked at the rest. The members of the other departments were also seated on the floor, listening to the broadcasting carefully. *There has to be someone who's reliable here—*

Found one. Takuya spotted a man at a neighboring platoon, and nudged his elbow at Micott. The latter followed his trail of vision, saw the same man, and widened his eyes slightly. “What do we do ?” she whispered back. “It’s not too far away. I’ll go over and come back immediately. It’s easy to get past their eyes.” Takuya answered as he looked around. There was a distance of 5m to the group of wounded at the wall. He glanced aside at the invigilator who forgot to watch over them, and gathered strength in his feet while not letting himself float.

Gael Chan’s face was looking into space, not noticing Takuya’s stare at all. The way he straightened his back and folded his feet reminded Takuya of a great-grandfather sitting down.

(The problem is that the Republic’s self-autonomy will have to be returned very soon. If it becomes the original Side 3 and is not allowed to have self-governance beyond its boundaries of author, the fad to create a co-prosperity ring amongst the Sides will not happen. Now, our problem here will be how to extend the deadline to this dissociation. At this moment, we received an invitation from the Vist Foundation, who wanted to hand the “ Laplace Box” over to us…)

Part 11

“I don’t think that Cardeas Vist knew of our plan. He probably proposed to hand over the “Box” at this time because he hated having the Federation system remain like this while the Republic dissolves. It is common knowledge that the Federation hopes to end Zeonism before that happens.”

Just like how the destroyer installation of the fable of Newtypes, the "Unicorn", is showing. Frontal expressed these unexpected words as he suddenly looked over at Banagher, causing the latter to recover and look away.

Zinnerman and Angelo were at a loss of words, and even Mineva did not hide her overwhelmed expression. Frontal continued in a robotic and unrestrained voice that was scarier than the prosperity of the Side co-prosperity ring he was talking about, and Banagher looked back at him. It was weirder to see him say with such a serious look. *What's with this supernatural atmosphere that doesn't feel alive—*

"To us, it can be considered a blessing. This "Laplace Box" is said to be able to topple the Federation government…and if we can get it, we can ensure that the Federation will allow the Republic to coexist. If we ask for the revival of Zeon, the Federation may have no choice but to launch a full-scale war, but they may accept a request if we ask for a delay in the dissolving of the Republic. I thought it was worth a try, and wanted Zinnerman to head to the trading place, "Industrial 7".

There was no need to ask about what happened next. Frontal did not show any fatigue from the long speech he made, and finished his words without any change in expression. Soon after the reception room became silent again, "I see. So that's how it is." Mineva spoke up, and she narrowed her eyes at Frontal again.

"What you wanted to get from the "Box" is time, Captain. You want to buy time to delay the dissolution of the Republic and develop the Side co-prosperity ring."

"What you said is correct."

Frontal immediately answered as he wordlessly prompted that it was her turn. Mineva did not answer as she sat back on the sofa and looked over at Zinnerman.

"Zinnerman, do you know of these?"

"No, I know that the sponsor of the "Sleeves" is Monaghan Baharov of the Republic however."

Mineva followed Zinnerman's stare at Frontal as she gave the latter an interrogating look. Frontal's still body remained unmoved as he continued, "As I had explained, this is different from the old movements to revive Zeon. I was worried that a soldier like Lieutenant Zinnerman, who had been serving the Republic army wholeheartedly, would definitely refuse, so I withheld the important before that moment. I do apologize for that."

"There's no need to apologize. Once I heard everything, I felt that it's all a stupid plan."

Mineva answered with an adamant voice and pressed the call button on the communication button to shut it off. Frontal remained silent as he accepted her stare.

"Am I wrong? A co-prosperity ring of the Sides that excludes the Federation…instead of wanting to change the people who do not want to change, you want to ignore them. This is too distant from the dream of human renewal Zeon Deikun had. It's too realistic and not cute at all."

As Frontal stood without expression, Angelo showed an angry expression from behind. A killing intent that could shake the air raced through the atmosphere in the room, and Banagher's skin under the pilot suit had goosebumps.

"It so different from the madness Char had when he wanted to turn Earth into an inhabitable planet and pull humanity up into space…even the passion levels are so different. Is this really good for the man who calls himself the Second Coming of Char?"

Mineva took a step forward as she looked up at Frontal. Her emerald eyes had a trace of heat in it, causing Banagher to sense that there was an unknown force of attraction between then.

"Once the Side co-prosperity ring happens, Earth will be isolated. The economic gap in space will increase, and like what it implies, the roles of ownership will reverse. In this case, Earth will have a replay of Anno Domini again. Earthnoids will quickly develop Earth again to support their economy. In this new era, those who grow up under poverty will try to plan revenge on Spacenoids; just like how Zeon started the One Year War."

Frontal did not say a single word. As she faced the tall figure standing beside the red wall, Mineva continued with a clear and emotional voice,

"There's no reconciliation, no innovation, just a future that lets the strong fight the weak…do you really think this is good? Do you, a man who decided to stand in front of others again, feel that this—"

"It's not a question of good or bad any more, but that this is the world of humanity at work."

The interrupting voice caused Mineva's body to ostensibly shudder for a moment. Frontal reached his hand for the mask on the table, and said,

"I said before that I limit myself as simply a vessel. A vessel won't think, but will only act based on the consciousness humanity implants in it."

The mask giving off a silver gloss covered his face again. Mineva lowered her face slowly as she saw the masked face seem so distant from her as there did not seem to be any resonance amongst them, and her eyes were showing signs of faltering, "…Is that so." Her tone had a flair of despair in it, and Banagher felt a slight ache in his heart.

"So the Char Aznable I know of is truly dead."

These leaked words caused Zinnerman's eyebrows to twitch. She turned her back on the wordless Frontal and sat down on the sofa. She closed her eyes, let out a sigh of probably disappointment , and her caped back sank deeply into the sofa.

""Industrial 7", the colony builder "Magallanica"."

Mineva spoke as she opened her shut eyes, and the melancholy from before vanished from her face. She did not look at Banagher, who clenched his fists, and continued calmly,

"That's the final coordinates indicated on the Laplace Box."

While Zinnerman and Angelo were taken aback, "Oh—" Frontal looked over at Banagher, who looked away; once the stare through the anti-glare filter gave a confirming look for a moment, he turned his masked face back at Mineva.

"Thank you very much. Once we rendezvous with the fleet again, we'll immediately change our course and head for " Industrial 7"."

"Whatever you do."

Mineva hissed as she got up from the sofa. She did not look back at Banagher, who lowered his head, and her leather boots-clad feet advanced to the door. Banagher felt each step prodding at his chest, ostensibly testing his will, and he clenched his fists hard while remaining silent.

"Where are you going?"

"You have heard from Zinnerman before, right? I was saved by that boy quite a few times."

She stopped in front of the door, and looked back at Banagher for the first time. The latter then lifted his head slightly,

"It's really weird to betray a benefactor like this. Allow me to act freely after this."

He was unable to look back at those emerald eyes in time as she turned her head away and left the room. Frontal saw the door close, and turned his stare to Angelo, saying, "Make sure the security is tight throughout." Once he finished, he left the landscape portrait. "Yes." Angelo got into a proper posture, gave Banagher a glance, and touched the handle to the door that was just closed. Once the back with the intent to watch over Banagher left the room, Frontal let out a sigh and sat on the sofa opposite Banagher.

"Allow me to ascertain, Banagher."

The voice was as steady as before, but there was a toughness in the words that demanded for unconditional agreement. Perhaps it was because Mineva had revealed the location that there was no need to play any word games like assistance. Banagher looked back at the mask wordlessly.

"So the starting point is the end point; that's certainly a classic way to fool us. It seems your father really has quite the sense of humor."

"That's not it!"

Banagher's voice rang as he inadvertently called out, causing the coffee on the table to form ripples. He got up from the sofa suddenly and excluded the metal mask from his eyes.

"The final destination can be any point. What I see, what I feel before I reach it…that's the most important thing. Even if we know the answer and reach the destination, the "Box" may not open. If it 's not someone who went through the same path and shouldered the same burden…"

He uttered out the last line while turning his face at Zinnerman. The latter's expression wavered as he did not say anything and glanced aside. Frontal's stare did not look away from the rooted Banagher however, "Only those who know the hard work of a journey can find the bluebird that left home." He recited.

"That's rather classic too."

The twisted lips curled up, and it seemed that the entire mask was making a mockery. Banagher did not want to say anything else as he looked away.

Part 12

Another hour and so on passed after the unexpected broadcast aired to everyone, and the mobile suit regained its moment of lull. The soldiers at the wall near the starboard started to create commotion, and Gilligan moved his mouth away from the straw of the nutritious jelly.

"What is it?"

"It's one of the guys who created the commotion with the rest of the crew. He says that his stomach's hurting, and the army doctor' s now looking at him."

The soldier ran to the briefing room on the neighboring deck, panting as he reported. "Stomach pain?" Gilligan asked back as he looked at the monitor showing the scenes on the mobile suit deck.

The briefing room had many monitors on the wall, and at this point, had become the restroom cum command room for the Republic army. The time was noon, and it was 4 hours into their occupation. The broadcast from before caused all personnel to tense up, but the captors and captives were certainly starting to tire. The witnessing of a prisoner being killed directly seemed to have brought about an unexpected amongst of pressure to everyone. Gilligan too felt jumpy about having to wait, "I'll go take a look. I'll leave the rest to you." He said to the subordinate and went off to the mobile suit deck.

Under zero gravity, the effects of someone standing or lying were the same. He checked the faces of all the Special agents, saw that no one was lazy enough to fall asleep, and approached the group in question. There was a crew member in the middle of a group of men dressed in overalls, probably mechanics, clutching his stomach and struggling, and he looked young enough to be a teenager.

The doctor in white cloak was listening in with the stethoscope. “What is it?” Gilligan asked, and the doctor took off his stethoscope, saying,

“I think it’s a cardiogenic symptom, but his pain isn’t normal. I want to use the infirmary.”

“We have soldiers here for escort. If it’s just a stomach pain, we can handle it.”

Gilligan could not ignore the possibility that they were planning something, and he looked straight at the slightly tanned face of the doctor who seemed to be of Arabic descent as he spoke with a refusing tone. “I think he has a chronic illness.” a female crew member beside the boy then interrupted with a stiff tone,

“I think it’s some medical term that’s hard to describe, but I did hear that we must be careful if his stomach starts to hurt again…”

“Why in the world is such a guy a crew member?”

“We aren’t crew members, just civilians who got involved in the battle of “Industrial 7” and are unable to return home.”

There’s such an issue? Gilligan looked back at the crew member who could be described to be a teenage girl and the ball-shape gift robot in her hands before looking back at the doctor. The moment the doctor was about to speak up, “Don’t talk too much, hurry up and bring him to the infirmary.” another voice rang from behind, causing a ripple in the surrounding air again.

"A Republic soldier who only knows about military training can only refuse anything that's beyond your expectations, right?"

A bald man in pajamas was gathered with the wounded beside them, showing a teasing smile as he got up. Gilligan felt hot in his chest as he took a direct hit in his weak point, and turned towards the man as he put his hand on the handgun on his waist. "Oi, don't just stand up like that!" The invigilator Petty Officer growl as he raised his rifle while approaching the man.

"Think of how the prisoners feel about being watched over by amateurs. If you can't make decisions on your own, go ask the " Sleeves" on what to do then. Ask them with those cool capes of yours."

"Damn you…!"

The Petty Officer's expression changed drastically, and he slammed the stock of the rifle into the man's abdomen. Gilligan was unable, and did not want to stop the Petty Officer; he saw the man float into the air because of recoil. The man bent back and writhed as he took the hit in the abdomen while the torso of his pajamas revealed the bandages. At this moment, Gilligan recalled the term 'wounded' he forgot, and his heart jolted. "How can you do such a thing…!" the army doctor ran over to the man.

He, with the help of the group around them, let the man lie on the floor, and opened the torso in front of the pajamas. "Not good, his wounds seem to have opened." The Petty Officer backtracked upon hearing the army doctor's voice. *What do I do?* He was implicitly showing this question on his face as he looked back at

Gilligan. “I’ll bring them back to the infirmary. Is that alright?” The doctor continued, and Gilligan took this sharp stare from him, *hold it* swallowed these words he nearly uttered out, and looked around.

The wounded were at the feet of the Petty Officer waiting for instructions, looking back with unhappy looks on their faces. The other groups have realized the commotion going on as they looked over, and the soldiers watching over them were showing obvious signs of doubts. If he were to refuse here, there would probably be an insurgency. *A commander must not show signs of hesitation.* Gilligan recalled this ancestral teaching and nodded to give the military doctor his approval. The doctor then carried the man immediately, “That boy needs to come too. Help out here!” The doctor growled as he kicked himself off the floor. Since there was no time to wait for soldiers to come in on active duty, Gilligan could only carry the boy who was clutching at his stomach.

“Lieutenant…”

“I’ll go along with them. Make a call through the wireless communicator and tell 2, 3 people not on active duty to head over to the infirmary.”

“Right. What about the contact with the sleeves?”

The Petty Officer asked without any show of respect, causing Gilligan to feel the heat rise in his chest again. “You’ve heard the broadcast just now.” He said as he glared back at the young Petty Officer.

"We're the vanguard of the "Wind's Assembly". The "Sleeves" soldiers here don't even know of the Side co-prosperity ring. There 's no need—to ask them for instructions."

Unlike the Garencieres team that's comprised of guerillas, the men of the "Wind's Assembly" is comprised of the elites nurtured under Lord Monaghan. There's a lack of experience, but our position is definitely nearer to the top. He recited these words to his pride that was somewhat wounded, and went straight to the nearest airlock. "It hurts…" the boy groaned, and the girl with the toy robot followed form behind.

Gilligan followed the army doctor carrying the bald man by the soldier, and got up to the elevator leading to the gravity block. Gilligan carried the boy beside him and drew the handgun at his waist. Gravity started to occur in the descending elevator, and he let the boy down onto the floor as the latter felt heavy.

The gravity he had not felt for a long time seemed to have caused the blood surging in his head out of tension and excitement to fall. *Am I being too reckless to go along with them alone?* He felt the difficulty of wielding a handgun in gravity and muttered in his heart. *It's always like this. I always thought that I can't be too indecisive here; that's why I keep making shallow decisions. I guess it's because I was always sick when I was little, and was teased by my classmates for being unable to catch up.* He thought and tapped his head twice to stop his consciousness from leaving. (Haro!) Gilligan heard this line that he should not be hearing at this time, and turned his head around.

The round discs that looked like ears flapped about, and the toy robot in the girl's hands floated in the air. *The power's not shut off?* Gilligan said, and noticed the girl's expression looking behind him at the same time, but it was too late before he could point the handgun behind.

A hand moved at a speed blurry to the eyes as it grabbed the handgun, while another hand grabbed the collar. The face of the bald man was right in front of Gilligan. "You…!" The latter let out a suffocated voice, but the impact that exploded between the legs made him unable to breathe.

GRAK! Once the man heard the groan, he slammed an elbow into the back of the head, causing Gilligan to lose strength in his knees. Gilligan's vision quickly turned dark, and his head hit the elevator door. They probably reached the destination level as the electronic sound rang afar while he was losing consciousness.

"I'm Gael Chan of the Vist Foundation. Remember the name."

The elevator door opened as the man's voice rang. Gilligan wanted to grab the communicator on his waist, but missed as he collapsed onto the floor. "Welcome back, Haro!" The girl exclaimed. (Charge!) The toy robot answered as it started jumping forward, and the sound of the men running out passed by from above. The toy robot hit the back of Gilligan's head and hit it like a platform in a way not considered a final hit. Gilligan's consciousness fell into a black abyss, and he heard the noise of his classmates calling him a scaredy-cat in it.

Part 13

The gravity was a weak false one made to match the Moon's, but to a body that had been used to zero gravity, it felt like there was a dumbbell on the shoulders. Takuya ran into the long arching passage, and fell forward onto the floor; his body felt like a lead block, and he cautiously ran down the corridor. He followed Gael, who would stop at every cross junction to see if there was anyone around, and went to the infirmary together with Hasan and Micott .

If possible, bring Doctor Hasan along and head to the infirmary—the note rolled into a bundle was the basis supporting their actions here. Gael leaned on the wall in a way not affected by gravity at all, held the handgun he stole from the Republic soldier with both hands, and prompted Takuya to stand in front of the infirmary. The moment Takuya was about to open the infirmary, there was a sudden pain that caused him to bend and clutch at his stomach.

"What is it?"

"I've been pretending to be in pain, and now I'm really in pain …"

Takuya was hoping that Micott put her hand on his back, "Idiot. " but she simply answered back. Takuya frowned for a reason other than the pain as he knocked on the infirmary door. Once he was certain that there was no reaction, he exchanged nods with Gael and opened the door. He looked around the infirmary that had some antiseptic smell in it, and the moment he stepped in, " Who is it!?" a shout shook his head.

The man was exchanging looks as he stood at the ICU door linked to the infirmary. The pilot suit with the Neo Zeon emblem definitely belonged to that of the “Sleeves” escort squad. Takuya was immediately dumbfounded, *Is this a trap after all?* the moment he thought about it, “Emergency patients, didn’t you hear?” Hasan said as he stepped into the room and gave an intense stare at the escort squad member onto a doctor would have. If it were the Republic soldier from before, he would be overwhelmed by this stare, but this escort squad member did not let down his guard at all as he continued to point his gun at them, not moving at all. “ Hold on, let me check.” The soldier answered and reached for the wireless communicator on his waist. Takuya and Hasan casted side glances at each other.

Gael had fighting skills that were no inferior to a soldier, but he was wounded. It seemed that there was no chance to launch a stealth attack on the escort squad member who would fire without hesitation. At this point, Gael did not even have the time to turn his head and look into the room, and Takuya continued to exchange stares with the escort squad member who was not letting his guard down. Suddenly, there was a black shadow behind the soldier. Bonk! A dull sound echoed through the room.

The escort squad member took a hit in the back of the head, and his legs went limp as he fell forward due to gravity. Gael immediately charged in and got onto the soldier, but Takuya did not see what he was doing. He merely stared at the person standing at the infirmary door, blinking blankly. Hasan and Micott , who followed in after Gael, showed the same response.

Mineva Zabi. At the moment he muttered her name, she dropped the fire extinguisher in her hands and ran over with her cape flying. She reached her hands and grabbed both Takuya and Micott. One could hear her racing heartbeat from the compressed chest.

"Thank you for believing in me…!"

After hugging them tightly, she brought her body away from them. Her slightly moist emerald eyes were different from those of Mineva Zabi's cold and ruthless aura. She resembled the girl Banagher called Audrey, and she had the eyes of the girl they met in "Industrial 7". After exchanging doubtful looks with Micott, " Ah, no…" Takuya scratched his head, but at this moment, "What do you plan to do next?" Gael asked. They spotted him pull the wire from the wire gun to tie the hands of the escort squad soldier from behind, and Mineva suddenly looked back at Takuya with a serious expression.

"Mr Takuya, you just had a plan with Petty Officer Gibney over something, right? Please execute it."

Takuya's mind recalled the last expression Gibney showed when he said that they were to activate the bow thrusters manually, and gulped in response. "Doctor Hasan, please return to the mobile suit deck and untie all the ECOAS members." Mineva turned her sights at the doctor and said with a calm voice,

"Just hand the pliers over to one of them. They should be able to handle the rest themselves."

"It's too dangerous. The Republic soldiers may not be as sharp, but the people of the "Sleeves" will immediately realize the anomaly here. If they release the air on the deck…"

Gael said. *Release the air to make them suffocate*—Takuya understood the reason why the crew was gathered onto the mobile suit deck, and gave a pale look as he exchanged looks with Micott. "That's why we have to be fast." Mineva answered with an adamant voice and looked back at Gael without any signs of backing down.

"Please proceed on to save Banagher, Mr Gael. According to what I heard over the radio, it seems that he was moved to the detention room below."

"Understood…what about you?"

The face that seemed experienced in dealing instructions to others showed hesitation for the first time. "I'll be working together with another comrade." She said with a somewhat lowered voice, and suddenly turned her head over. Takuya and the others looked over at the curtain that was blown up, and passed through to the door of the ICU.

The curtain was pulled aside, and once he saw Mineva's expression as she lowered her head to look at the bed, he deeply realized the weight of the term comrade. "She's…" Takuya heard Micott's whisper, saw Mineva not look at others in the eyes, and turned his face at the female Neo Zeon pilot lying on the bed.

He remembered that her name was Marida Cruz. Her sleeping face was so beautiful it was dazzling, to a point where he could not believe she was the pilot of the four-winged mobile suit. “Doctor Hasan.” The adamant voice caused Takuya to lift his head.

“Please make her wake up. Inject as much painkiller you think she needs so that she can continue to fight.”

Mineva said this while looking at Marida, and Takuya, Micott and even Gael gasped as they looked at the side of her face. “But…” Mineva did not look back at Hasan, who expressed such doubt, “I’ll bear all responsibility.” She continued forcefully, lifted the hand of the still-sleeping Marida, and immediately knelt down on one leg.

“Mairda, it’s me, Mineva Zabi.”

She cupped the hand in her hands and brought it to her forehead, lowering her head in a prayer-like manner. The troubled presence seeped from her shoulders, and Takuya sensed Hasan return to the duty office from behind him.

“I know this is too much, but I hope that you can wake up. We need to fight against the monster born from our grudges. I need your power; please fight with me to prevent Zinnerman from making more mistakes…!”

The voice that was eked out passed through the caped back, causing the air to tremble. The eyebrows on Marida's still face twitched slightly, and the fingertips cupped by Mineva moved a little.

Part 14

"Understood. Bring a few men from the Garencieres and head over. Don't let the Republic soldiers know…right, I'll leave it to you."

The red uniform finished the call with Angelo, and the large body facing the communication panel looked back at Zinnerman. His attitude and the masked face were still suspicious to a point where one would want to keep staring at him. "It seems we lost contact with the guard keeping watching over Her Highness." The voice sounded like an act, and Zinnerman gave a look at Frontal, not even bothering to give a surprised look.

"It seems the last point of contact was at the infirmary. Do you have any clues?"

"No."

Marida's face appeared in his mind, but in his current state, he could not think of how Marida would be involved in this current situation. The atmosphere alone with Frontal was remarkably lull ever since Banagher was brought away from the reception room, and Zinnerman felt that he was imprisoned by some fatigue. Even though he knew that he could not relax too much, he had a sense

of fatigue telling that nothing mattered, that anything goes at this point. He admitted that he was tired, and that it was not the uneasiness of betrayal of the pain of the conscience pricking him. All that had been done here was making him tired, the several hours that passed since the occupation started, the one month they spent chasing the "Box", the 16 years after the war, everything—

"I do apologize sincerely for hiding the Side co-prosperity ring from you."

Frontal was seated at the sofa in front of Zinnerman, sounding as if he had realized what Zinnerman was thinking. The latter lifted his tired eyes.

"But I never thought of betraying the agreement to have Her Highness Mineva be the leader. I said that I don't care about the name of Zeon, but the Zeon Republic is the only one that can be the leading country in the Side co-prosperity ring. Once we pave the path, we can make Her Highness be the leader. This is a huge position neither Minister Monaghan and I can take up."

It was a fact that they agreed as a condition to view Mineva as the princess when Zinnerman affiliated himself with the "Sleeves", but at this situation, he started to feel that it did not matter at all. Mineva was need to gathered the efforts of all the people related to the Principality, but she had no other value. It was the same whether she was involved in the Sid co-prosperity ring, but there was a role she could take up if there was a need. Zinnerman had no strength in hating Frontal for this implication and looked away from the masked face. "You're not interested, right?" These words came in at this moment,

"That's fine too. It's because you're like this that I let the Garencieres team act freely, Captain."

"…What do you mean?"

"Since you were entrusted with the child, you naturally wanted to protect Her Highness, and you have the sense of responsibility to your own subordinates. But those are mere responsibilities; you never had any particular interest in reviving Zeon at all. You hated the Federation with a vengeance, but you know that this isn't a grudge that can be cleared completely just by taking revenge."

The eyes covered by the anti-glare filter did not seem to be reflecting light, and Frontal let his body rest on the sofa's back.

"And thus, even if it was for a moment, you were on a Federation ship. But as time passed…no, from the moment you stepped aboard this ship, you felt that you couldn't erase your hatred, and you did what you had to do."

The hand reaching for the coffee was trembling. Frontal did not let Zinnerman's eyes escape as the latter drank the cold coffee, and continued with a smile on his face,

"Activists succumb easily as they're used to justifying themselves. However, for people like you, captain, who don't harbor much hope in humanity and the world, it's hardly for you to succumb because you aren't fixed. Once you understand the innermost self within you, you'll be the most reliable partner."

The hands in white gloves closed up at the knees, and Frontal finished his words with an unchanging cold tone. There was no room to interject, and upon hearing this self-analysis even he could not explain, Zinnerman first showed a smile. But he did not have the courage to laugh it off; he looked into his barren inner heart while pretending that it had nothing to do with him, "You seem to be saying…that you're the same type as well." He answered with a hollow voice. Frontal still had a thin smile on his face, but did not answer back.

"How do you actually feel deep inside, Captain?"

"What do you think?"

"Well…I'm not very good at such word games, but I did hear of a rumor before. It was said that when the Second Neo Zeon War was about to break out, Supreme Commander Char's plan to send a nuclear winter onto Earth was just incidental. His real intent was to fight his sworn enemy since the One Year War, Amuro Ray, and have a decisive battle."

There was no need to play along with his pretense. Zinnerman knew very well that the moment he said it out, their relationship would never be the same again, but he still chose his words carefully. "Oh?" Frontal merely made a short reply as he kept his unmoving expression.

"I understand how he feels. He has an enemy he wants to beat, an opponent he can vent his frustrations on to feel fulfilled. He can forget his despair by chasing after the enemy. But Amuro's dead,

and Supreme Commander's Char's uprising was turned to nothing , yet the Earth Celestial Sphere had not changed. Even if he were still alive, what does he want to pursue this time? There's nothing for him to compete again. The ideals of Zeon Deikun became something not worth believing. What does a sad man who felt despair for the world and humanity feel deep within him—"

"Isn't this the same as you, Captain?"

Frontal immediately interrupted Zinnerman and got up. The lips under the mask were clearly stiff, and though Zinnerman felt that there was a sense of emotion there, he did not want to confirm as the tall and burly turned away to look at the landscape portrait on the wall, and let out a sigh. In the end, he felt the weight of the words he said return back to him. "Grudges won't vanish…" he muttered.

His hatred for the Federation, hatred for the who that was unwilling to change, hatred for himself as he was unable to do anything—the hatred he had when his wife and child felt terror and despair as they laid dying. He wanted to crush the emotions rising up in him, but was unable to do so, "It's true that vengeance won't disappear that easily." Zinnerman said as he subconsciously looked at his weak hands.

"But sometimes…I do feel tired too. It's not emptiness, but simply tired. I'm just wriggling in the darkness, having given up on everything…"

And thus, he accidentally reached his hand out. Even though he knew that he could not handle it once it reached him, he was still

attracted by that irreplaceable light. Marida, Mineva, Banagher; he saw the light remains of these names under his eyelids, and his face was contorted as he was unable to make a self-depreciating face. "That's to be expected for a man." Frontal said with his back turned.

"If Char Aznable is still alive…perhaps he's no longer human?"

The line that was thrown out was stuck at the chest, causing the icy air to scatter, and Zinnerman inadvertently looked up.

The red profile giving off an inhuman presence looked like an ornament decorating the landscape portrait as it floated in front of the wall. *No longer human—this isn't a metaphor, 'what exactly' is this man? He's right in front of me, but he doesn't seem to be here; it doesn't feel like this man's breathing the same air as me, and where in the world is he born in anyway?* Zinnerman started asking himself while ostensibly being driven by fear, but got an answer that Frontal may not be from this world, and felt goosebumps all over. *Impossible, this isn't possible.* He wanted to laugh, but his stiff cheeks could not move, and the moment he clenched his fists that were about to tremble, the coffee cup on the table started to rattle as it ostensibly took the tremors from the fist.

Frontal turned his head in surprise as he heard the rattling of the porcelain. After that, a tremendous sound of impact rang from the floor, and all the coffee cups were thrown into the air. The table bounced up, covering Frontal's body, and even the sofa was floating. Before he could get down for cover, Zinnerman tumbled onto the floor.

Part 15

This was not an impact that one could brace himself for, and the sound of the ignition was deafening; it caused an added burden to the bodies of the prisoners to inertia, and Takuya fell onto the floor of the engine floor. Micott, who fell onto the floor as well, let out a scream, while Haro dropped out from her hands and bounced around the narrow room. This was not a moment for Takuya to lift Micott up as he tried to move his mind that was sticking onto the floor, and he looked over at the console that had countless working lights on it.

The control panel for the thrusters on the bow filled the entire wall, and the thrust sign was flickering on the movement monitor. The bow thrusters near the front end were an installation used when the ship's moving in reverse or decelerating. It was originally an automatic control that could be operated from the bridge steer, but it could be manually controlled at the maintenance engine room like this.

After 10 seconds of full speed thrust that was beyond the safety limit, the redirection nozzles let out another flare. An acceleration force of more than 1G lifted the "Nahel Argama" by the bow, and the ship was lifted by the bow thrusters that changed angles, creating a spinning effect due to the uneven inertia. The ship became a washing machine, and whether ECOAS could use this chaos to create a chance for counterattack—nobody would not after this. Takuya was about to reach his hand for Micott lying at the floor, but he was shocked by the sudden alarm.

It was the alarm indicating incoming impact, and the sharp siren common in all space ships echoed through the suppressed vibrations. “Not good…!” Takuya inadvertently muttered. “What’s going on now!?” Micott asked, but there was no time to give her an answer. Takuya climbed up to the console and brought his face to the action surveillance monitor. Once he was certain that the bow thrusters were changing its thrust direction based on his input, he switched the image of the monitor to the outside for visual. As the silver stars were moving horizontally on the screen, the moss green ship floating in space was shown on it, and Takuya widened his mouth once he saw that they were getting close.

“It’s a Zeon ship! We’re going to crash!”

Its unique shape resembled a high-heeled shoe, and it certainly was the Republic army’s Musai Kai-class cruiser. He knew that they were nearby, but he did not think that they were so close to a point where they could actually attach a bridge next to each other. “Can’t we stop!?” Micott exclaimed, and Takuya ostensibly lost himself as he looked at the console. The bow thrusters started to let out a second, and he was thrown into the ceiling.

After a tremendous impact from behind, he was thrown back to the floor because of the recoil (Danger! Danger!) Haro showed as it floated from behind the back of the head, while Micott, who was thrown into the air, floated towards the console. Takuya bent over to grab her clothes at the shoulder, yanked her back with all his strength, cupped her head with his hands, and closed his eyes shut as he await the next impact.

The floor, ceiling and walls surrounded them as they floated helplessly, spinning around in a dazed manner. *The ship might hit the Zeon cruiser from the head, and this engine room will be thrown into space as well, but even so, I mustn't let go of my hands, definitely not.* He told himself as he used his entire body to embrace the warmth in his arms. Micott's arms were wrapped around Takuya's back, and she brought her cringing head into his chest. As the heat from the outside mixed with the body heat, a quake that made everything before seem tame in comparison overwhelmed their senses, and the impact passed through the engine, ostensibly dislocating the bones.

Part 16

The starboard of the "Nahel Argama" crashed with the Musai Kai-class cruiser "Dromi" beside it. Its bow was suddenly lifted and spun at the "Dromi" in a large arc as it was directed by its bow thrusters with its nozzles redirected, causing the ship to crash into the "Dromi" in a slanted manner.

The situation was devastatingly shocking to the "Dromi", which mobilized its personnel to the "Nahel Argama" through launch boats and kept its distance. The Captain was unable to tell his crew to carry out evasive maneuvers, and the white ship that was closing in on them covered the windows of the bridge, causing a huge jolt that shook the hull of the "Dromi". The "Nahel Argama" starboard hit the upper deck of the "Dromi", crushing its main cannons, before stopping.

Luckily for both sides, as both sides were following the relative velocity of the 'L1 Junction', the relative velocity between both ships could be considered to be still. In the end, there was merely a scene of ships scraping each other, and not crushing each other, but the impacts the people inside felt were not to be taken for laughs. The "Dromi" was hit by an assault cruiser that was twice its weight, and was practically sent flying.

The 3 main cannons were crushed in a single blow, igniting a chain of explosions and circuit sparks; the ship took the vicious force, and was tilted greatly as it floated to the 'L1 Junction' direction. The keel supporting the ship had tremendous cracks on it, and the "Dromi" was in a floating state. Above it, the "Nahel Argama" momentum was negated, and may be looking still, but the "Dromi" was not the only ship in chaos.

All the unfastened items were sent flying, and the impact spread from the bow to the tail, causing all the facilities to rattle. The cylinder of the gravity block stopped working for a moment, and the objects that were originally held down by the centrifuge force were dancing about wildly in the all. The partitions of the zero gravity block let out horrifying sounds, while the light panels that were not shattered shook through the ship. Gilligan was awakened by the impact sirens, and was then swallowed by the impact that came from behind as he bounced through the passages without understanding what was going on. Angelo, who was headed to the infirmary, hit his back against the ceiling, while Flaste and company in the bridge fell off their chairs. It was the

same for the mobile suit deck, as screams and growls were mixed together while the group of more than 400 people were thrown into the air.

The mobile suits were not sent flying as the hooks under their feet were latched onto the trenches on the deck, but it was different for the humans who only had magnetic soles under the feet. The prisoners that were ordered to sit down on the deck were thrown into the air without exception, and the invigilating Republic soldiers were floating about in the wide deck, their limbs swimming about for something to support on. Even if there was an order not to move, nobody could stop moving in this situation. The relationship between the watchers and the prisoners had collapsed at this point, and while everyone could only try to ensure that they were safe, the ECOAS members were the first ones to get into action.

Hasan got back from the infirmary, and the plier he handed them reached all the members' hands; at this point, they were removing the restrains of the last man. The moment everyone else was thrown into the air, Conroy saw several figures swimming in the air, and stepped on the back of someone nearby as he swam through the air. He kicked the shoulder and backs of many crew members floating around, used the recoil to move his body, and charged right at Alec, who was holding a submachine gun. While the Republic soldiers were still lost, the Garencieres team was still sane enough to watch their surroundings, but they were no match for Conroy, who was skilled at moving under zero gravity.

He got behind Alec and used his burly arms to lock the latter by the neck. The blood in the carotid pulse was obstructed, and Alec

soon fell limp. Conroy drew the wire gun from his waist and shot at the Republic soldiers that sensed this situation.

Conroy shot the wire gun towards a soldier that was about to raise his automatic handgun, and robbed the latter of the mobility of his hands. He then stacked the body of the unconscious Alec onto him and used the mass of two men to pull the body of that soldier over. The soldier that was guided glided through space, and the moment he was about to approach, Conroy slammed a quick elbow into the back of the soldier's head. There were around 90 people watching in comparison to the 29 ECOAS members. Garity and the other men were below Conroy as their platoon had only one man watching over them, and they too kicked the walls and the other crew as they attacked their prey.

"Those who have weapons are to cover the Captain's men and head to the bridge! The engine operator is to head over to the engine room!"

With a gruff roar, the submachine guns were thrown into the air . Otto's momentum allowed him to get down onto the floor, " Follow me!" and he immediately flew towards the airlock. Several men attacked the invigilators, and followed Liam and the rest who had managed to get the weapons. The tremor of the ship caused by the bow thruster nozzles allowed the ECOAS to counter. This was the plan Hasan told them to get the ship back, and what was left would be the decisive moment. The gunshots that were sprayed randomly caused Otto's heart to freeze as he passed through the airlock and left the mobile suit deck. The moment he was about to grab the lift grip on the wall, "Hold it!" a voice called out, causing him to freeze.

The Republic soldier standing on the passage raised his automatic rifle. Otto hesitated for a moment when he saw the soldier's young face. *Can I not kill him?* His body felt that the opponent was still human, and he was screaming without reason. At that fatal moment when he did not squeeze the trigger, the flash of a gunshot rang through with a loud sound.

Otto instinctively closed his eyes, opened them immediately, and saw the Republic soldier with a bullet hole shot right in the middle of the forehead, bleeding. Liam lowered the rifle poking over Otto's shoulder, "Hurry!" yelled, and moved first as she stepped on the floor. Otto saw the corpse of the Republic soldier that spun and slammed into the wall, looked over at the smoke from Liam's gun nozzle, and grabbed the lift grip with a guilty look on his face.

"I'll handle the back! Hurry!" Garity yelled as he chased them away, and Otto let the lift grip move at the fastest speed possible. He was a Captain that was responsible for the lives of all his subordinates, but he actually lacked such resolve. As he looked at the back of Liam, who went off first, "Sorry." He said simply. Liam 's face turned slightly, "This is fine." She answered while ostensibly angry.

"Just be who you are."

Liam seemed to have said something important, but she turned her stare forward after their short exchange of looks, not allowing Otto to ask back. Otto felt the submachine gun he was holding in his hand, and turned his eyes to the path he was headed to. The

gunshots continued to ring, and the most important thing to prevent any more sacrifices was to get back the ship. However, he did not know what the meaning of the term sacrifice was, and this thought was the only thing driving his unconsolidated mind.

Part 17

Soon after the ship stopped shaking, the sound of gunshots could be heard from afar, and it had become a background sound that shook his eardrums, just like the air-conditioning. Banagher was in the detention room, without any communication panel to determine the situation outside, and stuck his face at the door window. He looked through the metal window to check the situation on the passage, heard 2, 3 short dull bursts from beyond his sights, and a familiar bald head then appeared on the other side.

Before he could back away in time, the sound of the door laced with mattress to prevent self-mutilation being unlocked rang, and it sprung open suddenly. “Good thing you’re alright, Master Banagher.” he looked up at the tall and burly body turned against the light, and Gael said this as he grabbed Banagher by the arm, pulling him out of the detention room.

“I’ll open a way. Please go and activate the “Unicorn”.”

Gael pulled up the guard he knocked unconsciousness, threw the man into the detention room, and wielded the handgun with both hands again. “We’ll talk later. Hurry.” There was no time to ask Gael who was saying this, and Banagher held his breath as he ran down the corridor. After he summoned the coordinate data of

the “Unicorn” in the cockpit, he was dumped into the detention room in the gravity block, ostensibly worthless. The commotion seemed to have started in the zero gravity block, and there were no other people on the way to the elevator.

“Please immobilize the enemy units in the ship. There’ll be trouble if the mobile suits start an uprising here.”

Gael finally spoke up after he operated the elevator. About what was going on, what happened— there was definitely no need to ask. He suppressed his throbbing heart, “What about the hostages?” Banagher asked. “ECOAS should be saving them now.” Gael’s reply was drowned out by the gunshots that got gradually louder, and the electronic sound indicated to them that they arrived in the zero gravity block soon after.

The door opened, and Gael swept the gun around together with his eyes, before floating out onto the passage. “Let’s go! Don’t stay too far away from me.” Banagher followed this muttering man and held onto the lift grip on the wall. The gunshots got louder the further he progressed forward, and the scattered gunpowder smile agitated his nose. He let go of the lift grip that had reached its end point, and was about to kick the wall to float to the airlock of the mobile suit deck, only to be knocked down by Gael onto the floor. Incoming bullets grazed by from above, and the sparks of impact flashed upon the wall.

Gael squeezed the trigger to counter, and immediately rolled back to retreat behind the cross junction. Some bullets flew in unknowingly, hitting the wall, and the scattered dust landed on his head. “Mr Gael!” Banagher exclaimed as he lifted his head that

was looking down. The blinding gunshots caused him to narrow his eyes. “Please go!” Gael called out as he reached his handgun from behind the wall, releasing covering fire that would require a miracle to hit the enemy.

“You mustn’t let a man like Frontal make use of the “Box” and your father’s will!”

The desperate looks crossed, and Banagher sprang into action before his body could think. He kicked the floor and flew to the airlock around the cross junction. The bullets grazed by his body that was shot out like an arrow, Klang! The sound of metal clashing was reflected off the airlock door. He gritted his teeth, passed through the door, and was nearly about to crash in as he used his momentum to grab the handrail of the catwalk. The mobile suit deck was suddenly spread across his eyes.

In the space filled with both Federation and Zeon mobile suits, there were gunfire on the catwalks at the opposite wall; the sounds of gunfire in this combat caused this high place to become a battleship. The crew members that were dangling in mid-air were waving their limbs, those that got to the catwalk first fired the wire guns, and the ECOAS members were shooting to provide cover for the crew that was coming in. As for the Zeonic side comprising the Republic and the Garencieres team, they were trying to get in the way of the crew being saved while trying to get onto their own mobile suits. Several people were approaching the “Hizacks” only to be beaten back, and this process continued over and over again.

The “Geara Zulu” of the Garencieres team was being approached too; there was suppressing fire around the cockpit,

and one would know without thinking the outcome of letting a mobile suit run rampant in such a cramped ship. Banagher looked around the ship from behind the handrail, and looked at the " Unicorn" standing at the bowside partition wall. There was a distance of more than 30m, and he did not have the belief that he could safely pass through with the gunfire blazing. *So I can only get on through the catwalk?* The moment he thought of this, deafening gunshots rang from below. Banagher immediately got down, and Conroy covered him, sweeping through with a submachine gun as he charged over.

"I'll cover you! Go on, Banagher!"

Conroy did not wait for the reply as he poked his body out from the handrail, and the reloaded submachine gun let out a roar. The bullets gliding through the air reached the catwalk opposite, stopping the gunshots fired over to them. *It's not a question of whether I can do it or not; I have to do it.* He took a deep breath, held it in his lungs, and charged out from the catwalk.

The hard feeling whizzed by above his head. He was to destroy all the mobile suit cockpits before they activate, and go out to fight against the enemy forces that were invading. He chased out all other thoughts in his mind, and extended his body over to the " Unicorn". The white machine got gradually darker, and the opened cockpit hatch filled his eyes. As he was about to reach his hands for the hatch, his body endured the inertia and stuck itself onto the armor; at this moment, a powerful generator rang, and the heat waves that came were striking down on Banagher's back.

(That's enough already, Banagher.)

The heat waves burning the skin were mixed with a cold voice. Banagher climbed onto the cockpit hatch and looked behind. He could see, beyond the beam saber blade that was shaking the air, the monoeye of the "Sinanju" looking back at him.

(It's best for you not to be reckless. Since we now know where the "Box" is, there is the option for us to burn you together with the "Unicorn".)

The beam saber created from the sleeve cover matched the red giant's body as it trembled slightly. This alone would could the heat waves to tremble, and the radiated air struck the deck in the form of wind. *When did he…Banagher did not have the time to think about this. The beam particles could melt Gundarium alloy, and was like a furnace packed in the shape of a sword. The burning hot energy was striking down 4, 5m away, and Banagher glared back at the "Sinanju" monoeye. He took in the heat waves that burned his lungs, clenched his fists, and turned his back on the cover of the cockpit hatch the beam saber was pointed at.*

I may be vaporized the next moment until even my bones are gone, but it's fine. This is the only man I don't want to succumb to. He was driven by this unknown source of stubbornness, and wanted to move to the cockpit. (What do you want to do?) Frontal's voice rang from behind, and the heat from the beam saber closed in as it blew Banagher's hair.

(Once you deny us, how do you plan to use the "Laplace Box"? Are you going to believe in the kindness of humanity and hand it over to the Federation?)

It was a question that was left till now; Banagher's heart was pumping wildly, and his body was unable to move. He turned his stiff neck and looked behind again. The distortion of the air was caused by the heat of the beam source, and the red giant's monoeye looked like it was swaying.

(A human's heart is fragile. The crew on this ship will forget about the "Box" once they return back to their duties. If the Federation gets the "Box", the distorted world till now will only continue. Isn't this against the wishes of your father, who wanted to change the world?)

The pointed beam saber remained unmoved, and behind the " Sinanju", the massive purple mobile suit, Angelo's "Rozen Zulu" was shaking. Perhaps Conroy and company's resistance was weakened due to the initiative the "Sinanju" took right at the beginning. Banagher saw the monoeyes of the mobile suits, including the Garencieres "Geara Zulu" which stepped off its hangar, and moved his immobile body onto the "Unicorn" armor.

(We're the only ones who can use the "Box" and fulfill the wishes of the Spacenoids that were practically abandoned. It's because your father knew this that he wanted to hand the "Box" over to us. What can you do? How do you want to use the power of the "Box"?)

The "Sinanju" monoeye wavered in the distorted hot eye, twisting about in a mocking manner. Banagher saw the gunfire behind it, and he could visualize the familiar figures that were battling.

Conroy was overwhelmed by the activated "Geara Zulu", but had not given up on saving the crew members who were still in space. Gael was running past the passages with gunshots firing. Otto, Liam and the rest were having a gunfight near the bridge. Takuya and Micott, and of course, 'she'—these people recognized that they were fighting on their own battlefields, racing through them, but what were they fighting against? Banagher wondered. It was certainly not for the Federation, as this ship was already beyond the command of the Federation army.

Get the ship back, get the initiative, this is the only thing we can do to survive—but that's not all. Humans will change, and they can. They can blend in and evolve according to the changes, making progress bit by bit. The people on this ship all made contact with this possibility, standing on the edge of the world, using whatever they can do to face the changing possibilities. They feel angry at the possibility that was denied, something that brought about despair. Everyone's fighting the common enemy, driven by their human instinct to reject anything illogical.

This was the key; these were the words that existed in his heart from the moment he decided that he was going to believe her no matter what. Banagher again embraced these words and looked up at the "Sinanju" monoeye. Maybe he would be betrayed, maybe it was just his misunderstanding, but the god called possibilities in the human heart was born out of trust and continuous trust. The moment humans were imprisoned by despair and admit that they were abandoned, they could only face the world with pains all over them. *Father knew this, and that's why he wanted to open the seal of the "Laplace Box", to send a ripple down the deadlock called stability, before the fad of revolution cools, before the Universal Century sinks into complete forsakenness. He believes that there's still room to improve this world.*

This gentleness and power of humanity he wants to show the world—it may be just those, but if nobody believes, nothing will happen. He believed 'her', he believed in the possibility that this ship may get it, and he believed in handing the "Box" to a real Newtype. That man's kindness believes that this grand and stupid plan can be—

"…For the sake, of everyone."

Banagher unwittingly said it out, and looked straight at the masked face through the "Sinanju".

"I'll use the "Box" for everyone, not between Federation and Zeon, and not between space and Earth. I'll use the "Laplace Box" for everyone—

The beam saber closed in, pressing a wall of heat on Banagher, vaporizing the following words. (What do you mean by 'everyone'

?) This question passed through Banagher's heart, and he sensed that this question was scorching his skin more than the heat.

(A single human will never become a spokesperson for all the wills, unless you become a vessel.)

The masked expression looking through the monoeye was pressing on the body leaning on the "Unicorn" armor. Banagher tried his best not to look away.

(This isn't something that can be done easily. If you want to be a vessel, you need to empty yourself. Only when you're devoured by the abyss of space, passed through the stage of madness, and entered the next realm, can you reach this state.)

The voice seeping out from the red armor was dripping through the pores. Banagher sensed that the 'vessel' Frontal was talking about was a reference to 'God', and gulped.

(You do have talent, but you are too young. If you really want to become a vessel, follow me.)

The "Sinanju" lowered its beam saber, and its advising look was flickering on the monoeye. The heat waves scattered away, and Banagher felt a chilly wind surround his body.

(The beliefs and possibilities you trust in now will be betrayed one day. A Newtype leeched by despair will only self-destruct or shut himself in. I've seen so many examples of this. You cans still make it now, however, so follow me. You should be able to understand that you can't return to the 'everyone' you speak of.)

Banagher suddenly felt a sharp pain deep in his chest. It was the pain riddled deep within his heart, the pain of the heartfelt words hitting home. Banagher felt the icy wind rob him of his warmth, and lifted his head to look at the "Sinanju". *This is a fact too—this man's describing himself; maybe I as someone else was a reflection of him.*

Only the people filled with despair in their flesh and blood can understand the logic of humanity, and get the power to change the world. This euphoria is just for a moment, and defenseless belief will only bring about self-destruction or self-shutdown…will I be coerced to death by despair, or will I seal myself deep inside my heart while being unable to do anything? Banagher's body trembled as he was unable to find anything to deny these words. He merely looked up at the eye of the red giant, felt an illusion of being sucked in by the light, only for a 3rd voice to ring through his mind.

—Keep saying 'even so', Banagher.

A 'voice' formed a fresh gust of wind as it blew through his mind. It passed through the floor and burned the mobile suit deck floor in the form of physical heat. The scorching metal color spread around the feet of the Sinanju, and the red hot light flew out from the inside in an instant; currents of hot winds and explosions stood at a corner of the deck.

(Funnels…!?)

Frontal ostensibly cried out as he sat in the "Sinanju", which took an impact. A fire pillar shooting out like a volcano reached the ceiling, and Banagher saw a round small object popping through the scorching torrents, using its thrust to glide through the

air. The object that was no more than 3m in size dodged the horizontal sweep from the “Sinanju”, shot out vernier flares to restrain movements, and glided into the clutches of the red giant. The cannon at the tip of a funnel aimed at the “Sinanju” cockpit, stopping the red machine from swinging its beam saber.

Similarly shaped objects passed through the smoking hole on the floor—and funnels started coming out one after another. The automatic funnel array was controlled by psycommu from afar, passed by the crew members that were still in detention, passed through the space on the deck, and instantly surrounded the two “ Geara Zulus”, sealing their movements. The “Rozen Zulu” was behind them, and moved its monoeye from side to side frantically. Banagher did not wait for the funnels to dodge the claws that were swinging in a fly-swatting manner and aim at the cockpit as he kicked the armor of the “Unicorn” and went right at the cockpit.

He passed through the hatch, sat on the linear seat, and felt the generator rumbling from below the deck. *It’s coming,* he predicted as he looked at the partition wall through the hatch. The floor at the front wall was opened, and the elevator leading to the factory below rose up. As the “Rozen Zulu” retreated, the giant appeared as it was ferried up by the elevator, its overwhelming mass shaking the atmosphere on the mobile suit deck.

The 4 large pod binders equipped on the shoulders covered the giant in the middle without any openings, and the thick legs that were knelt down got up slowly. The binders opened like petals, and the thick machine with stout limbs at the ends and the Neo

Zeon crest engraved on the chest was revealed. The head hiding the Mohawk head was lit under the lights, and Banagher called out to the owner of the 'voice' with all his strength.

"Miss Marida…!"

The monoeye flickered, ostensibly responding, and the large frame of the "Kshatriya" took a step forward once the elevator stopped rising.

This 4-winged giant was kept in the ship's factory ever since it was taken back from "Palau". Though there were many scars of battle on it, but its movements were not as slow as a wounded. The fact that it made the mobile suit deck look narrow just by appearing did not change. Leaving aside the "Geara Zulu" that was the size of an ordinary mobile suit, even the "Rozen Zulu" that was of similar mass to the "Kshatriya" staggered as if overwhelmed, and moved aside for the latter machine.

The funnels floating in the air moved about agilely, aiming at the mobile suits that were thinking of firing. The "Kshatriya" blew apart the thick smoke swaying about as it moved to the center of the deck, and suddenly stopped there. With all eyes staring at it, the deep green machine let out 'her' voice, causing Banagher to feel his gulped air stuck in his throat.

(Notifying all soldiers of Neo Zeon and the Republic of Zeon, this is Mineva Lao Zabi.)

「ネオ・ジオン、並びにジオン共和国軍の全将兵に告げる。私はミネバ・ラオ・ザビです。ただちに武装を解除し、この艦から退去しなさい。ザビ家の血を継ぐ者として、怨念返しは許しません」（本文より）

Part 18

(Drop your arms immediately and retreat from this ship. The developments Full Frontal described of do not have a kind future, and it's too distant from the ideals of Zeon. As a member inheriting the Zabi bloodline, I do not allow for any vengeance upon revenge. We're living in a blank as a result of the One Year War and the past Neo Zeon Wars.)

Gilligan passed through the mobile suit deck, and walked onto the catwalk; even if he did not want to see it, the large frame of the mobile suit was in his eyes. He stood blankly and did not let his feet stick onto the floor, causing him to float around aimlessly.

The large mobile suit with 4 wings had scars all over it, and the sleeve on the right arm was burnt off, but the pressure it gave off was not to be underestimated. More than 10 funnels were deployed in the air, and it seemed that it had completely dominated the atmosphere on the deck. "Mineva Zabi…why?" Gilligan muttered as he stared at the four-winged. The head seemed to be at his vision, and had Mineva inside. *The princess of the Zabi family, who was basked in the cheers of Sieg Zeon as she adamantly appeared, did she deny our actions by riding on a Neo Zeon unit—*

The Special Forces standing aside let down the automatic rifles in their hands and backtracked. Several other soldiers lowered their weapons, showing faltering expressions as they were rooted in fear. "Oi, you guys! What in the world are you doing!?" Upon seeing them like this, Gilligan grabbed a Leading Seaman by the

collar, “Her Highness Mineva…” who merely replied as he did not look back. “SO WHAT!?” Gilligan roared as he forcefully shook the Leading Seaman.

“That Mineva’s a fake, or maybe she’s saying such things while being threatened by the Federation! Can we hold back now that we ’re at this stage!? WE, THE “WIND’S ASSEMBLY” IS HERE TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY…!”

He roared with his trembling voice as he said this to himself. *At this point, there’s no way we can return back to the Republic army. I haven’t had any heroic exploits I can be proud of in the military meetings. Am I going to testify that we thought we occupied a Federation ship, but I got knocked unconscious in a sneak attack, the situation changed during that moment, and I snuck back quietly?*

It doesn’t matter what Frontal hopes for. The important thing is to save our country; in the face of the Federation that wants to uproot our name of Zeon from this war, the people should unite and protest, and we’ re the vanguards. Gilligan repeated in his mind again as he glared at the 4 winged mobile suit. Its monoeye seemed to detect this stare as it looked back (To the soldiers of the Republic Army, I can understand your anger.) Mineva’s voice rang.

(I understand very well the difficulty of being the vanguard of a dishonest country, the hatred of being belittled, and the hardy lifestyle of being on the run. But this is the result of the past Zeon actions. Even if you try to justify the past, you’ll never get any self-pride back. If you can’t forgive the pretense of a country that calls itself peaceful, try and think of how to turn this lie into truth. The Principality of Zeon endured the hardships of war, and yet it

can do it. Even though it lost its name of its country, its real inheritance is to go for a peaceful ideal. And you people are escaping from the difficult battle of protecting this inheritance. As warriors of Zeon, you should be ashamed of yourself."

"Her Highness…that's her Highness Mineva…!"

The Leading Seaman groaned in a fever-like trance, pushed Gilligan's hand away and ran off. "Oi…!" The soldier did not respond to Gilligan's call, who saw him run through the airlock without looking back; he did not have the strength to catch up, and stood rooted. *Turn the lies of a peaceful country into truth? Escaping from a difficult battle? What's she saying? Ignore he mockery of those who insist that we're a fallen country, and yet not abandon it? What exactly is wrong here?* Just when he was unable to think, the light in front of his eyes suddenly darkened. (Squad leader Gilligan, it's time to retreat for now.) The voice that came through the speakers rang, causing him to lift his head dully.

(Our forces are reduced to a third here, and the remaining ones are running back to the launch boats on their own. It's about time for us to leave.)

Sub-Lieutenant Keiman's "Hizack" reached its left arm out. Gilligan looked at the funnel sticking behind it, turned his stare at the four-winged that was watching all the movements in the deck, and lowered his head upon realizing that he had no chance of winning, "But just like this…" he choked head while unable to gather enough strength to clench his fists. (Let's return to the mothership and regroup.) Keiman's voice continued.

(The "Gultoppr" and the "Dromi" are still around. If we can launch a hit on the outside of the "Nahel Argama" before it recovers. Then we'll meet up with the approaching "Sleeves" fleet again.)

These words felt like a spider web thread dangling in the darkness. "Ye…yeah. that's right." Gilligan instinctively answered and leapt into Keiman's manipulator, ostensibly relying on it. *Doesn't this guy feel anything after hearing Mineva's words?* This instinct passed through his mind, but his thought not to regret upon what he decided was stronger, and Keiman brought him to his "Hizack Custom". The funnel next to Keiman's unit did not seem to be interested in those that were leaving, and the sieve-shaped mobile suit floated in the air.

(The people of the Garencieres team are to keep their guns again. We'll work together with the people from the Federation again; I don't think you wanted to do so right at the beginning, if you had nary tried to believe in a single possibility, there is no way you would have rode on this ship.)

Part 19

"I'm the same in that I can't believe in this possibility completely. Even if I had known that it would have ended up like these, there are no words I can say to stop you. However, someone still believes, he still wants to believe in us. I hope everyone knows and respond to his sincerity; this is the final 'light' that was granted to me."

Light. This term poked at Marida's tense skin, causing her mind that was not completely focused on the psycommu to look outside.

It was the "Kshatriya" cockpit she was used to, and Mineva Zabi was saying these words on the assistance seat. There was no stranger combination than this, but Mineva's words soothed her inner heart that was aching, ostensibly because of the bad sleeping posture. She felt a warm breath of life inject into her slightly aching body and spread throughout. *The Princess seems a little different from before,* Marida thought as she thought about what she was doing in a corner of her consciousness.

She felt she had a very long dream before she was guided by Mineva and returned to the cockpit of the "Kshatriya". She had a nightmare where she was driven by rage that continued to drive her and clashed blades with Banagher's "Unicorn Gundam" many times—but the ending was very warm. A pair of hands reached out from the 'light' and pulled her out from the darkness. *Was that a dream, or was it my real memory? Or is this a continuation of my dream…?*

"I suppose the grudges and distrust of the Federation won't be erased that easily, but what we should really hate are some people who intend to use this hatred. They hail the revival of Zeon, the release of Spacenoids, but they never believed in anything, and they do not have love. They're some existences that mocks the possibilities in humanity, denies its evolution and reconcillation."

A monoeye lit up, indicating the activation of a Hizack-type mobile suit, and it passed through the shutter leading to the aft

with an allied machine, not showing any killing intent at all. Marida sensed that they were planning to leave the mobile suit deck, and called back the funnels that were aimed there to deploy them around her unit. She continued to control the funnels and aim at the cockpits of the mobile suits she could see in front, the " Sinanju" and the purple mobile suit giving off sharp killing intent through its armor,. As long as she controls the output of the shots, the ship would not take too much damage. Even if Evan and Kwani's "Geara Zulu" want to resist, she could deal with the " Sinanju" and the purple mobile suits before then.

The tensions and doubts before than became a ripple that caused her senses to run amok the battlefield. It was not a dream, this was reality, and the moment her mind affirmed this again while it was starting to become clear, Marida continued to listen to Mineva's words. The tone the Princess used was different from what she used in the past. Even if their wills were as firm, she knew that Mineva's voice was never this gentle…

"Those who despair about the current reality have no rights to talk about the future. The future is merely the result of today, and if we continue to stop in the darkness, the future we hope for will never come. If we don't walk to the 'light', we'll—"

(Marida Cruz)

A familiar voice rang inside the cockpit, and Marida sensed Mineva shudder as the latter held onto the portable wireless communicator. The switches in Marida's mind were switched, and she felt her thoughts that were around 1 second earlier scatter as her widened eyes stood still like a puppet.

(Open the cockpit and undo the funnel controls)

This voice was not of the owner of the hands that pulled her out from her nightmare—even if it was a voice from the same body, even if it was the voice of her master. Once she realized it was her master's orders, Marida's body moved instinctively, and she moved her hands from the ball shaped controls. "Marida, you mustn't!" Mineva stood up from the assistance seat and exclaimed; there seemed to be a scorching heat from the arm under the pilot suit that was grabbed, causing her a pain inside her heart that was different from the physical pain. However, Marida's body and mind was merely ignoring such things as she got into standby mode; she pulled Mineva's arm aside and pulled the lever of the cockpit hatch.

The monitor panel in front slid open, and the external air blew in and upon their faces. "Zinnerman, you're still…!" While Mineva continued to hold onto the wireless communicator, Marida waited for the next instruction. She knew very well that her master was on this mobile suit deck, and though she remained silent, she wanted to express her heart that seemed to be crushed. *If he's in pain, why …* this was not something she could ask. She had no rights to step into her master's inner heart; she was to hope for what her master hopes for, and she was to take part in battles where she was to fight her master's enemies. If this was giving her all, she could only share his pain—

"Marida, pull yourself through. This isn't Zinnerman's true thought."

Mineva got up from the assistance seat, got in front of Marida, and said so. The light shining in through the cockpit hatch was blocked, and Marida moved her eyes slightly.

"You should understand, right? Zinnerman's hurting now. It's your turn to help him; you're the only one who can save him."

Mineva placed her hand on Marida's shoulder and poked her body over the console. The shining light from behind created a lining beside her, and the image of Zinnerman, her master appearing in that light as he stood away from the light shining into the dark underground room, overlapped with Mineva's at this point. "Light…" Marida inadvertently muttered. *The 'light' that saved me, the arm that pulled me from my nightmare—daddy's arms.* Mineva's expression was becoming brighter, "Right, you have to be Zinnerman's 'light'—the moment her lips moved, the light shining into the cockpit suddenly got darker, and a tremendous impact hit the "Kshatriya".

The metal let out a deafening sound, and Mineva's body was thrown out of it. Marida wanted to reached for Mineva, but was unable to grab her; she held the ball controls again to adjust the machine that had crashed into the partition, and looked at the source of the pressure.

The machine that was as large as the "Kshatriya" stood there and the purple mobile suit moved its monoeye and glared over. It charged over because it knew the funnels were removed. Marida saw the arms equipped with the sharp claws shaking; the arms charged for Mineva, who was thrown out of the machine, and Marida immediately gave the funnels on standby the command to

shoot. The funnels flew with the wind moved together and surrounded the purple machine. It was not difficult for her to shoot through the cockpit before the claw pincer Mineva, but…

(Hold it.)

A voice that suddenly came in through the communicator stopped the movements of the funnels. (Stop it. This is an order.) The voice that was released probably did not understand what it was trying to stop. Marida could only obey the order, and she sensed the source of the common pain reach its breaking point as she started to look for her master in her reality vision.

Her master—Zinnerman, was harboring a heart that was about to be crushed, sitting back and waiting for Mineva to be mistreated . *It's my turn to help you, it's my turn to be your 'light'.* Marida repeated these words in her heart as she tried to exert strength into her hands holding onto the ball controls. Her resisting body started to cackle, her fingers were practically unable to move as they trembled like a leper, and a scream that was without voice filled the cockpit of the "Kshatriya".

Part 20

The three claws grabbed Mineva, who was tossed into the air, and acted like claws of a wild beast that caught its prey. Banagher inadvertently let his body move forward, but was blocked by a beam saber that was shining from the side, causing him to exert strength in his fist holding the control stick until it turned white.

The “Sinanju” held the beam saber to seal the “Unicorn” moves as it silently waited for the movements of its subordinate. Banagher saw the funnels point in another direction as they floated in the air. “Miss Marida, make him stop!” He exclaimed at the “ Kshatriya”, but there was no response. The “Rozen Zulu” that got Mineva looked over in place of the 4-winged unit that was kneeling on the deck and cringing. Mineva, who was clasped by the claws, was like a worm that could be crushed with a single finger. The sharp claws were poking at her abdomen and back, pressing down on the body that was not wearing even a normal suit.

(You said it’s for everyone’s sake? Banagher Links?)

The hideous voice came from the purple mobile suit. *Lieutenant Angelo,* Banagher wanted to call out, but his voice was frozen still, and his hand on the control stick froze.

(What kind of joke are you making? You don’t even know the pain of having something being taken from you. Does your everything here include me!?)

The large body of the “Rozen Zulu” raised Mineva to the front and took a step closer. Its hooks under the heels sank into the notches, and the footsteps of metal shook the air, causing Mineva’s body to jerk backwards as she was exposed to this tremor. A little scream rang from the wireless communicator she held onto, and Banagher felt his hairs stand. Even if it looked to be a mere tremor, it was a painful interrogation to Mineva, who was held down by the claws. They cut into the body, ripping her cape and clothes,

and may had crushed her rips. (Stop it, Lieutenant Angelo!) (This is too much!) the two "Geara Zulus" too faltered as they took a step forward, and Kwani and Evan's voices rang. (SHUT UP!) Angelo roared, and the monoeye glaring at the "Unicorn" remained unmoved. The "Rozen Zulu" again took a step forward, and Mineva's groan of agony agitated Banagher's ears.

(ANSWER ME, BANAGHER LINKS! DO YOU DARE TO SAY SUCH WORDS IN THIS SITUATION!? CAN YOU SAY SUCH WORDS IN THIS SITUATION WHEN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO YOU IS BEING CRUSHED!?)

Mineva's pain reached Banagher, who sensed the pain beyond the physical pain of her body being ripped, and turned a pleading look at the "Sinanju". He hoped the calm voice could stop Angelo and end this misery, but the "Sinanju" merely pointed its beam saber at him as it remained silent. *It all depends on you. Make your answer, Banagher.* The voice under the mask reached him in the silence as its owner did not soil its hands, spiking into the boy's mind, which then fell into panic, creating a certain icy thing in it.

It was chilly enough to freeze his body and mind, but was also a fireball that could burn him and everything around them—*is this hatred? Is that the embodiment of the feeling that made Mahdi Garvey mad and kept clinging onto Zinnerman? His heart was pulsating away,* grrr… *the "Unicorn" growled. The psycoframe gave off a light, and he felt an attacking color enter the cockpit as he gave up on thinking.*

It's pointless now. It's useless to talk with these people. If this malice and hostility can rip through enemies, then even if my body's burned up —

(Stop…it…Banagher.)

The voice that came from the abyss of pain shot through the core of his chest like an arrow. Banagher's foot that was stepping onto the pedal unconsciously was trembling, and he recovered before looking up.

(This, is created, by us…you aren't the one, who has to fight.)

The body that was rid of its freedom brought itself up slightly, and she used both hands to press against the claws pressing down on her cleavage. The light of the psycoframe got weaker; Banagher felt the roar of the "Unicorn" fade away, and he stared at the cape that was fluttering with the wind, showing that will of hers. (Zinnerman…) Mineva let out a painful breath and continued her interrupted voice.

(This is, the result of what, we caused…the Red Comet here, isn' t Char; just a hallucination born from, our grudges.)

The beam saber right in front of Banagher was shaking slightly, indicating that the "Sinanju" was faltering. (PRINCESS MINEVA! IF YOU THINK I'M JUST MAKING A THRE—!) Mineva's voice interrupted Angelo's roar, (Wake up…!) and a forced voice rang through the communicator.

(Marida's here, and yet, you can't shake off your ghosts? Take, responsibility, Zinnerman…!)

An anguished voice spread through the deck, bringing pressure to the enclosed space. Banagher was ostensibly crushed by this

pressure, and spotted someone swaying as he stood up at a corner of the catwalk.

The profile had his stare lifted as he looked at the giants that were in a standstill. He looked as small as a bean, but this body in the shape of Zinnerman was obviously showing doubt on the all-view monitor, and Banagher looked at him without adding on with anything.

Part 21

The "Rozen Zulu" grabbing onto Mineva remained unmoved as its monoeye looked around with a timid expression. Perhaps it was trying to look for him, but Angelo's hotheaded state would make it impossible to find him. In contrast, Mineva was very calm, probably because she knew where he was. Even if he did not appear in her eyes, Mineva could have consciously discovered the despicable man who was hiding in this corner of the catwalk, observing the proceedings and giving a chiding look.

*The hallucination formed by grudges.*Zinnerman recalled the words that were left at his ears, and looked at the "Sinanju" through the handrail of the catwalk. It was just as what Mineva had said; no matter the true aim of Full Frontal, there was no soul of Char Aznable there. It was just as the man himself had said, he was the vessel of the Spacenoids' will—a vessel that was meant to be injected with hatred. This was something he knew right from the beginning but even though he knew, he continued to help Frontal and joined the "Sleeves". It was something he had to do; no matter whether Frontal was Char or a monster, nothing mattered as long as the military ranks could be reorganized again.

He was not dreaming for the revival of Zeon, and he was not fighting to earn the food for his subordinates. He just wanted to use something else to ease the pain, the pain of living on, the pain of having his grudges haunting him, the pain of being used as a living dump as he dealt with things more important than his life, the pain of struggling on. He could only continue on in order to forget the pain of his world being destroyed that could not be erased. As he continued to walk on, he finally made it here.

What's wrong about this? What else can I do? Zinnerman reached into his clutches, and took out a photo from a pocket he had never rummaged into. It was a photo of him before he embarked on his battles, when his skin still had shine, Fee who was standing beside him and smiling, Maree who was just past 5 years old. He looked at the photo he kept for countless years, and used his fingers to touch the face of his smiling daughter.

Maree's little hands; whenever he returned home, she would run over to him with a beaming face, and whenever he was to rejoin the force, she would cry and stick to Fee. *Now you're asking me to work together with the guys who crushed that one and only warmth that inherited my bloodline? The one precious treasure I had in the world? Stop joking around. If the past can't be changed, the present won't change either. The possibility of reconciliation, Newtypes, these are all nonsense. I didn't hear their screams; I was eating my meals, using the toilet, living the life in a prisoner camp, and I wasn't around when they needed me most, I couldn't do anything. This is unforgivable, unreasonable. Even if I want to die together with my ghost, only this grudge and regret—*

(…Daddy.)

A mumbling voice rang through the communicator and reached Zinnerman's ears, causing his finger that were stroking Maree's face to turn numb.

(Can you forgive me of my stubbornness…?)

The voice was steady, but there was a heat sensation that showed she was not willing to back down at all, causing his sights to turn dark in an instant. His inner heart was then twisted by something, causing the suppressed things to collapse. The voice rang in his heart, he lost his footing, and his body floated in zero gravity.

What are you saying? Why are you saying this in such a voice? I just said all those on the "Garuda" in a panic. That's just some impulsive rambling from a man who did not want to experience the feeling of loss again, and decided not to have anything— the words in his heart did not become a voice as a hot liquid flowed out from his eyes. Zinnerman did not know what to do as he looked at the daughter on his photo.

What's there to be forgiven? I'm the one who needs to beg for it. I haven't done anything, and I never thought of wanting to do anything. I just turned the 16 years of lies to my daughters while I hid in the shadows . You're still willing to call such a man, such a father…

"…I allow you."

That's if I still have the right. Zinnerman held onto the photo tightly, turned his tear-filled eyes at the "Kshatriya", and brought his mouth to the communicator as he said his last words.

"Follow your heart. This is the final order I'm giving you."

(Understood, master.)

Marida answered with a light smile, and the binders of the " Kshatriya" pulled its binders up. The sub-arms from the front poked up, and a beam saber flashed as the explosive light expanded through the deck with heat waves.

The bright and intense light looked to be burning the darkness inside the body. Zinnerman was unable to react to the unexpected situation, and the dazzling 'light' engulfed him in it completely.

Part 22

The beam saber flashed by, catching the right arm of the "Rozen Zulu" by slicing it up from below. (What…) Angelo murmured; the hand claws grabbing Mineva flew out, and Banagher's body instinctively probed forward.

"Audrey!"

The restrain of the claws was loosened, and Mineva—Audrey was thrown into the air. Mega particles from the funnels were fired behind her to cover, and though the output was low, the buzzing electric sounds shook the machine, creating rising flames of

explosion from below the feet of the “Sinanju”. Banagher let the “ Unicorn” move forward, and it passed by the red giant that lost its balance. He opened its cockpit hatch, and fixed his eyes on Audrey in the midst of the blowing hot wind.

“Banagher!”

The face looking back showed, and the caped body blown by the storm reached her hands out. “Please, “Unicorn”!” Banagher said these words, and kicked himself from the linear seat to fly out from the cockpit. He opened his arms wide and raced in the sky to catch Audrey’s body that was gradually approaching. Once he was certain that the mass was in his arms, they embraced each other, and were blown away by the heat waves before the “Unicorn” leaped and approached from behind.

He hugged Audrey by the head, trying his best to shrink himself. The white machine suddenly covered them, and an incoming pressure felt like it was going to crush them, causing him to feel goosebumps. The next moment, their bodies were sucked into the rectangular cockpit hatch, and they dropped into the linear seat while ostensibly falling in. Banagher endured the inertia and mass as he caught Audrey in the chest, closed the hatch, and held onto the control again.

The heat wave was interrupted, and the sweet aroma he had a whiff of several hours again chased aside the smell of ozone from the beam saber. After checking the smell and chest of Audrey Burne, Banagher resisted the urge to bury himself in the hair in front of him, “Are you hurt?” he focused his consciousness on the surroundings. He saw the “Rozen Zulu” swing its remaining arm

as it was tossed around by the intersecting funnels, and Audrey shook her head at this moment, her stare showing an intense light at close right.

"Banagher, to think that you really believe in me…"

"Of course."

Banagher looked back at the somewhat moist eyes, and answered with a seemingly angry voice. "Behind you…!" Audrey exclaimed, and Banagher's spine instinctively piloted the machine and turned it around.

The beam saber flashed on its own as it shot out from the sleeve, blocking the beam saber the "Sinanju" swung down. The beams clashed with each other, and the flashes and noise shook the cockpit. (Our plan was unexpectedly thrown into complete disarray.) Frontal's voice entered Banagher's ears, and this voice full of amusement caused him to sense Audrey's tense body.

(This place is too cramped. We'll have a duel in front of the " Laplace Box".)

"What…!?"

(It'll be a race from now on, Banagher.)

The clashing beam suddenly disappeared, and the "Unicorn" lost its balance as it missed its slash. The "Sinanju" used that moment to slam the unit, knocking the "Unicorn" aside, and lit the thrusters on its back to fly towards the aft. With the thrust pressure

, it pushed aside Evan and Kwani's "Geara Zulus" before passing through the shutter of the partition wall.

"Are you playing around!?"

If Banagher were to use the Beam Magnum, he would create a large hole through the "Nahel Argama". He lowered the rifle he wanted to raise, stepped on the pedal, and heard anything sound from the communicator. (Why would we be running?) The flashes of the hits appeared at his feet, and the cables buried under the floor let out sparks. The "Rozen Zulu" was left with one arm, and it shot suppressing fire from the front of that arm as it followed the "Sinanju" through the shutter, shooting the emergency airtank beside the door like it was giving a parting gift. The flames and storm shook the mobile suit deck, and the "Kshatriya", which wanted to chase after them, was surrounded by smoke.

(I'll kill you next time.)

A bone-chilling malce shot through the monoeye that was flickering through the smoke. The shutters on the partition wall were quickly sealed off, and the "Sinanju" and "Rozen Zulu" disappeared together from the deck. The air from the purifier caused the flames and smoke to remain as if under gravity, and the shutters were tightly sealed as they were covered by pitch black smoke.

Frontal's objective was clear. He intended to leave the ship deck just like this, meet up with the other escort squad machines waiting outside, make contact with the approaching fleet, and head forth to "Industrial 7". However, Banagher could not make

pursuit with Audrey on board, and he did not know of a place for her to immediately alight with all the flames and smoke abound as the “Unicorn” stood on the burning deck, not knowing what to do. Audrey, who was on his knees, grabbed the pilot suit by the chest. “Banagher, you mustn’t hand the “Box” over to Frontal like this.” She said whilst giving an urgent look back.

“The Side co-prosperity is simply an illusion. That man may really destroy the world if he gets such great power.”

“I got it. I won’t let him.”

The unmasked face still felt like a mask, the cold expression of forcing the notion of giving up to someone; those were not thoughts for the sake of humanity’s future, and there was no sign of pity to others or himself. It was a demon’s eye that was looking at this world from the outside, one without zeal. Marida, Zinnerman, Audrey; Banagher was able to think calmly because of the resonating warmth of their calls, and with their support, he put on the helmet in the cockpit. He thought in his heart that there was no time to hesitate. “Captain Otto!” he called out with a voice no softer than all the voices ringing through the communicator.

“Please turn to “Industrial 7”. The “Laplace Box” is over there!”

Part 23

(Frontal knows about it. Hurry. It’ll be bad if he gets the initiative!)

Banagher's voice rang through the open channel, causing Liam, and even Flaste, who had the gun pointed at him, turn around with shocked looks. Otto held onto the submachine gun with one hand, "Are you serious!?" he yelled back into the communicator. (There's no mistake.) Mineva's voice answered.

(I said it. He threatened to release the air on the deck everyone was on to coerce Banagher into talking. We don't know what this man will do if he gets the "Box". Please hurry and depart immediately.)

Otto gasped, and looked over at the sensor operator. The profile sat down at the console he just got back. "There're 4 "Sleeves" units, leaving by SFS. They're headed for the shoal space region." He reported. "Are they planning to make contact with the reinforcement fleet…?" Liam interrupted with an anxious expression. He looked at Flaste, who had given up on resisting; their eyes met, and Flaste's eyes confirmed silently that Frontal was this kind of man. "How's the takeover of the ship!?" Otto hollered as he looked over at Mihiro in front of the communication console.

"Each department has taken back the initiative. The mobile suit deck is starting with the firefighting and the evacuation of the wounded. Most of the Garencieres team has surrendered, and the Republic soldiers are retreating."

Mihiro answered without looking back as she listened in on the channels that were buzzing from all departments. Mineva's broadcast probably caused the enemy to lose their will to fight, but

though they seized the bridge back without bloodshed, it was not normal to see all the cadres fully armed. There was Flaste's subordinate being pointed with a gun at the console in front of him too.

"Ignore the escapees. Our priority is to repair each department. " Otto commanded, sat on the Captain's seat he did not feel he had seized back completely, and reached his hand for the microphone broadcasting to the entire ship.

"Once our preparations are complete, we'll launch immediately. Turn our path to "Industrial 7", set the shortest course—"

A sudden flash outside the window interrupted his words, and a blunt impact shook the bridge. "What's going on!?" Liam hollered as she jumped up with Flaste. The sound of the explosion interrupted her words and shook the outer wall of the bridge. Otto looked outside, "It's the Republic army!" and tensed up upon hearing the sensor operator's voice.

"The "Gultoppr" and the "Dromi" have encircled to the front. Minovsky Particles are at combat density. 8 enemy units launched. "

The white "Hizack" that flew by the bow was definitely a unit from the Republic army. The unique looking Musai Kai-class ships encircled the "Nahel Argama" with the 'L1 Junction' behind them. They were actually so reliant on scattering Minovsky Particles under such distance, and coupled with the exact same hit-and-run strategy from before, the overreliance of the tactics in the textbook really confounded Otto. "Those idiots, they haven't taken in all

their comardes…!" Flaste growled. "Anti-air combat! The mobile suit squadron is to launch if they can!" Liam yelled, and Otto looked at her back as he watched her forget to point her gun at Flaste. He was about to agree with her decision, but an unexpected thought caused him to increase the force of the grip on the Captain 's armrest.

He looked at the positioning of the enemies on the sensor monitor, *can this work? Is this really good?* He asked himself, and the only answer he got was that he could only do this. "LEAVE THEM !" He shouted with all his strength.

"Use a few machine guns for anti-air combat. Prepare the hyper mega particle cannon for firing."

He turned his stare to the front and stared at the 'L1 Junction' in the path. "REPEAT IT!" Otto ignored the stares from everyone else , and shouted. "Ye-yes." He heard Mihiro's stammering, and as she started to give commands to each department, "Captain…" Liam gave him a stare.

Is this really alright? her expression was asking this. it was the same expression as when she said 'this is fine, just be who you are' after he hesitated on whether he should shoot the Republic soldier. He looked back at those eyes, and suppressed the piercing pain in his inner heart. "We can't weaken our forces here." He looked away as he said.

"And there's the issue of time. We need to settle this in a hit."

It's different from having to do it. I can brace myself and kill just because I can't see the enemy's face. Once he realized this was a dullness the Oldtypes had, Otto looked around to see the devastated situation on the ship. He looked back at Liam with the expression of a Captain. "Yes!" Liam answered with a voice a First Officer should have, and they both looked forward.

This is part of training—he would not say such defensive things. As a foolish Oldtype, he had to at least bear responsibility for all he had done. He was extremely clear that this act was not something he could handle, but Otto continued to stare at the Republic flee that was starting to get in position. After the shock from the direct hit, the hyper mega particle cannon started to buzz as it loaded, and the light on the bridge became a dark red color.

Part 24

"Ceasing all evasive movement, directing full power to the hyper mega particle cannon."

"Coordinates steady, aiming the bow to the target."

"All hands, switch to backup power."

The voices continued with furor, and the lights on the ceiling was

dull as the mobile suit deck suddenly got dark, brightening the colors of the flames everywhere further. "Anyone that's free is to help put out the fire!" Conroy's voice echoed.

The crew with OBAs left the catwalk in ones or twos, and there were more than 50 people going everywhere to put out the fires. They just need to draw the air out if they wanted to do so, but with wounded everywhere, they could not use this method. The air purifiers brought oxygen in this zero gravity situation, and Conroy floated around with the firehose hose, while Tomura of the Garencieres team was pulling the wounded Republic soldiers to the air lock. Evan's "Geara Zulu" abandoned its beam rifle and threw aside the burning metal frames. While the “Unicorn” was carrying the wounded with both hands, Kwani’s “Geara Zulu”, which had a lost arm, was helping with the firefighting. (We’ll die if the propellants set off a chain reaction of explosions! Tell the mobile suits to remove the cartridges!) Someone’s voice rang through the communicator. (Republic men, anyone can do, report your battle strength. We have no idea of the numbers left on the deck!) A female voice passed by, probably belonging to the civilian girl called Micott.

There was nothing impressive. The men who were wielding guns and attacking each other a moment before were working together. There was no room to talk about whether reconciliation could work, and they could only move their bodies instinctively. Zinnerman sighed as he looked at this flaming field that had no discrimination of Zeon or Federation. The breath of fatigue he had

vented in for more than a decade floated on the deck, was buried under the continuous explosions, and were sucked into the purifier installation together with the smoke ans team.

The Republic army's attacks continued. The sound of explosions mixed in with the buzzing on the trembling catwalk, and once he heard his heart return back to nothingness, Zinnerman turned his stare behind. He knew there was someone there right from the beginning, and the expected face exchanged looks with him. Zinnerman first drew the handgun on his waist, and threw it at the other man.

"…Can I leave it to you?"

Gael Chan received the handgun that was thrown into the air, and looked back wordlessly. There was no need to say anything more to such a man; he was a man who was driven by the emotions he could not erase, who lost options in life, and could imagine how pitiful Zinnerman felt for losing his goal. Zinnerman felt that Gael was the perfect person to make the decision, and grabbed the handrail tightly. He subconsciously looked at the deck filled with smoke, and waited for the gunshot signalling the judgment to ring. "I refuse." However, Gael merely responded in such.

The burly body threw the handgun onto the deck, and kicked the floor to approach. *Such an ungracious man. Does he think that he can pay for the ship's fees with some cheap wine?* Zinnerman cursed in his heart as he glared at the unwavering bald head. However, Gael did not mind at all as he approached, landed beside Zinnerman, and turned his stare to a corner of the deck.

The large body of the “Kshatriya” could be seen opposite the smoke that was starting to disperse. Zinnerman spotted the moss green machine that was trying to avoid being seen, gasped, and his body had nowhere to go to as the monoeye looked back at him.

The “Kshatriya” slowly shook the 4 binders there were severely damaged, and looked over at him before opening the cockpit hatch . The pilot appearing from the inside did not seem to be in good condition. The blowing hot air on the deck made her footing unstable, but the long hair tied to the back of her head swayed. Her blue eyes regained some life, and her eyes were clearly looking back at Zinnerman through the smoke, giving off a glint that was like starlights 30m away.

“Maree…”

These words unwittingly leaked out from his mouth, and landed on his chest, bringing a tinge of warmth to his body that was like an empty hollow. Zinnerman’s eyes did not learn their lesson as they started to tear up, and he lowered his stare. “ Princess Mineva did say it before.” Gael did not look back at Zinnerman, and said,

“Take responsibility, Captain. She and Banagher still need you.”

Gael left these words, turned his back on Zinnerman, and left. *I don't have this right.* A tremor from a direct hit immediately dispelled the notion in his heart, and it shook the ship, causing the catwalk to rattle. Zinnerman brought his body back to the floor after nearly floating up, and his shoulders trembled as he was impacted by the surge of emotions. The water droplets scattered because of the tremor, floating in front of his eyes, and decorated Marida in the belly of the "Kshatriya" like lights.

Part 25

The light ring of the direct hit expanded, and instantly engulfed half the hull of the "Nahel Argama". Gilligan used the AMBAC to turn the machine greatly as he flew above the white ship. As he saw the anti-air fire that was unable to reach him at all, his lips showed a smile.

"As expected, the "Nahel Argama" can't use its main cannon after all. "Gulltoppr" and "Dromi", shoot the "Nahel Argama" down with your cannons! It's just a puppet that can't even dodge now!"

He called out into the wireless communicator, and raised the beam launcher of the "Hizack Custom". The "Nahel Argama" was perfect live bait as it remained unmoved even till this point, but perhaps the engine was malfunctioning, causing the generator to subpar, probably due to the battle with the "Gundam" from before . Gilligan could tell that the anti-ship cannons of the "Gultoppr"

and the "Dromi" could sink it with their cannons, and gave the signal for the allied machines to retreat. (We're still not done with the reclamation!) however, this answer came, infuriating Gilligan.

That Captain Hohky of the "Gullltoppr" is the one who most deserves the baptism of actual combat inside the "Nahel Argama". If two, three battles went by him, his weak brain will tense up a little. "LEAVE IT!' Gilligan turned to face the "Gulltoppr".

"THERE HAS TO BE A MINIMUM AMOUNT OF SACRIFICE!! THOSE OF THE "WIND'S ASSEMBLY" SHOULD KNOW. START BOMBARDING!!"

This is a war. His hotheaded mind was stating this, and he turned to look at the "Nahel Argama" that was full of burns. If the "Gundam" and the mobile suit with the funnels move out, they would have no chances of winning. The Red Comet's squadron had already pulled away from battle. "It's not in my intention to implicate my allies, but this can't be helped." He muttered, turned his stare away from the white ship that still had lots of his acquaintances inside, and glared at the "Gulltoppr" that remained unmoved.

"We must at least sink the "Nahel Argama". If we don't show that we did something to cover the Red Comet, the "Sleeves" won' t accept us."

They won't die in vain. As long as we're still alive, as long as we don't lose our wills as avant-gardes of the new world, we won't die in vain. He continued to repeat the words in his mouth. *Then what if the situation's reversed?* The voice of a devil's advocate questioned

Gilligan, “There’s no need for that.” And Gilligan’s words caused his face to numb.

(Let’s go back, Lieutenant Gilligan. The “Sleeves” fleet won’t respond to our call. The operation has failed.)

“WHERE ARE WE RETURNING TOO!? TRY RETURNING BACK TO OUR COUNTRY IF YOU DARE! YOU’LL BE DEEMED A LAUGHING STOCK, AND YOU’LL MOST LIKELY GET IMPRISONMENT FOR LIFE!”

Cowardly Gilligan. He seemed to hear the teasing of the bad children. *Those guys—those apathetic people of the Republic won’t understand that we’re acting for the sake of our country. Even Mineva Zabi doesn’t want to understand. To those that don’t want to understand , we can only show outcome, show our force so that they could recognize us, right?* He held onto the control stick with enough strength to sever it, wanting to shake off the voices of the bad children in his mind. (Give up. If you’re a soldier, just accept the outcome.) Captain Hohky’s reply however caused the last strand of sanity in Gilligan to snap.

No, this outcome isn’t an outcome. The Sides shall rise, the “Wind’s Assembly” shall be recognized as patriotic heroes just like the heroes of the past. This is the correct outcome. Those who’re upright can’t feel fearful about this moment of infamy— Monaghan Baharov’s words appeared in Gilligan’s mind, and he stepped on the pedal. The “ Hizack Custom” machine accelerated greatly, and the “Gulltoppr”, with its back facing the “L1 Junction”, slowly got bigger. He went by the still main cannons, went down the slope of the ship, stopped in front of the bridge, and braked to turn his relative

velocity with the ship to zero. He raised the beam launcher and aimed it at the bridge.

"Captain, this is the last warning. Shoot down the "Nahel Argama", or I'll shoot the bridge."

The steering pilot witnessed this through the window, and took a few steps back in fear. In contrast, Hohky's expression changed as he ran forward. *It can't be helped. You're like those foolish citizens too. Your senses are all numb from all the slavery, and you only know how to laugh at the passion to save our country.* "Lieutenant…! Don't be foolish—" Hohky shouted, "YOU'RE THE FOOLISH ONES!!!" but Hohky roared out in fury.

"WHY HASN'T ANYONE SEEN THIS REALITY CLEARLY!? WHY IS EVERYONE ABLE TO REMAIN CALM EVEN WHEN WE LOST OUR COUNTRY!! WE USED TO RECITE THE PLEDGE TO BUILD ZEON. THE ADULTS IN THE WAR WERE ALL SO MOTIVATED! EVEN DAD, WHO DISOWNED ME ONCE I ENTERED THE ARMY, USED TOO—"

BOOM. A wind pressure-like torrent blew by the cockpit, erasing all words that were about to follow.

All sounds were eliminated in that instant, and the white flash scorched the eyes. The next moment, the color of scorched metal surrounded the cockpit in a burning vortex. Gilligan saw that the all-view monitor was covered in red, and all the electronics were burning. The heat reached his pilot suit in that moment, and the hand holding the control stick was burning like fire.

"WAAAAAHHHHH!!!!"

It was hard to tell if it was a scream or the sound of the flesh being burnt to crisp from the exposure to high heat. But no matter what it was, that was the last sound that rang in his consciousness. Gilligan let out a scream that was unbefitting of a hero's end, but of a child, and felt despair as his consciousness was devoured by the scorching torrent.

Part 26

The "Nahel Argama" fired its hyper mega-particle cannon. This monstrous cannon weapon, 50m long and 18m in diameter, immediately melted the "Hizack Custom" in its path, and the " Gultoppr" and "Dromi" were also engulfed in the beam.

The window on the bridge was evaporated like soap bubbles, and the bodies of Captain Hohky and the rest inside were incinerated without remains. The electric circuits of the main cannon was exploded in a chain reaction as it was severed down the middle in half, and was scattered by the storm of mega-particles. The "Dromi" was immediately vaporized, and the hull tilted greatly like a tree swaying, its armor ripped off to reveal the skeletal frame. The hyper mega particle cannon buried the two Musai Kai-class ships, and did not negate its powerful energy even after such a heat. The scorching torrent continued to race forward, and the wild vapor of light hit upon the 'L1 junction'.

It was a massive construct that had a maximum diameter of more than 2km long, but it was merely a weak alloy of solar general panels and metal frames. This 'L1 junction' took a direct

hit from the hyper mega particles, and reacted like a burnt plastic kite hit by gas. The beam immediately landed on the solar panels that were enough to power 5 areas, and the snowflake-like crystal plate had a large hole burst through it. The core managed to avoid a direct hit, but it was impossible for the construct to be fine after a basking of a large amount of scattered particles. The collapsed and wrinkled core let out a chain explosion of flames, puncturing the metal frame, and splitting the collapsed solar power generator into countless pieces. This L1 junction which had been in L1 space for a long time as a lighthouse lost its ornament-like purpose as it gradually went into collapse.

The frame linking the solar panels was severed in a chain manner, and numerous reflected light scattered around the snow crystals. The core area exploded, and the stabilizing cable in the middle twitched a little. This cable started to be dragged by the gravities of both Earth and the Moon as it slid through the voice, and the husky 7.2km long cable became an arrow that signaled the end of the L1 junction as it deviated a little off course under the power of gravity.

As there were other scattered shrapnel dancing in this area, the “Hizack” squadron, which had lost their place of belonging, were flying about. They did not have time to care about their collapsed formation as they were doing their utmost just trying to dodge the shrapnel; during this time, the “Nahel Argama” ceased its beam attack and started to move.

The engines, which provided power for the hyper mega particle cannon, regained power, and 10 main thrusters lit their flares in unison. The “Nahel Argama” turned its belly to the collapsed L1

junction and went off to “Industrial 7”. As the thruster jets pressure blew the shrapnel apart, the ship that was almost 400m in length went away in an instant, and the 7 “Hizacks” were left, with nowhere to go, and the voices through the communicator rang in the void.

(The mothership’s sunk!! What do we do now!?)

(That’s why I didn’t want to do this…!!!)

(Don’t talk! We can only hang on with the oxygen in the unit before someone finds us!)

(I don’t want to suffocate to death here!! Mommy!!)

(Ca-calm down! This is the return path between the Moon and Earth. Some ship will save us immediately. The “Wind’s Assembly ” preaches…)

Part 27

In an instant, there was a tremendous flash as bright as the sun, immediately drowning out the twinkles of the night.

it was in the middle of the L1 space region. At a distance of more than 10,000km, one could only imagine what kind of thing could cause that flash; but given the thickness of the Minovsky Particles half an hour ago, it would not be difficult to imagine that something eventful happened a while ago. "How is it?" Nigel asked through the contact loop as he did not look at the expanded window no further.

It had been 6 hours since he launched from the "General Revil". The Base Jabber finished its final acceleration as it moved on with the help of inertia, and the pilot had time to analyse the optical data. The sensor abilities for both machines were about equal, but the analytical abilities of the Base Jabber should be better than the " Jesta". (But we can certain that it's an explosion flash.) But the pilot's response indicated that he too did not understand anything else either.

(We can be certain that the L1 junction there, but,)

"What is it?"

(We can't see it. At this distance, we should be able to see it now .)

Nigel felt goosebumps as there was a swoosh. He leaned his back on the linear seat as he looked at the space behind him. It seemed that both Daryl and Watts, in the "Jesta" and "Jesta Cannon " respectively, realized this as they stood on the Base Jabbers; they turned their heads around and turned their visored eyes upon him . Once the Minovsky Particles started to scatter, they had no way of pinpointing where the "Nahel Argama" was. The unknown ship in the same space region was the same too, but if the L1 junction was destroyed, one could imagine that they would not remain at the same place. "We didn't make it in time." Nigel turned his stare forward (Leader...) Daryl muttered, "Report back to the "General Revil" but Nigel ignored him as he spoke through the contact loop.

"The 'L1 junction' has changed. The target may have escaped from the area; to all patrol ships, please assist in looking for the target--"

(Emergency report! It's from the "General Revil")

Nigel felt a chill once he heard the Base Jabber interrupt him, and immediately answered as he gulped, "Read it.

(Yes. The observation team on the Moon side has confirmed the current location of the target. It moved from the 'L1 junction', and is moving through the shoal space region. Head over immediately, and pursue on as far as your fuel allows you to. Our ship will make full haste towards the junction. The preceding mission unit will immediately launch. That's all.)

What caused Nigel to gasp was not the fact that the "Nahel Argama" changed its course and went for the shoal space region, but the unnatural term 'secret mission unit' ringing at his ears. He recalled the face of the ringleader from the Vist Foundation, Alberto, who was now controlling the "General Revil", and frowned at the unspoken command, telling them to back down. *Is he scared of allies fighting against each other--no he wants us to revert back to the tactics for the original UC plan when we battle? This "Jesta" is built to accommodate the Unicorn-type mobile suit as a support carrier after all.*

"That guy...?"

The immature expression and the back that did not match the black pilot suit appeared in his mind. (Secret mission unit, as in...) Watts growled, "Just like what you see here." Nigel interrupted as he said.

"Once the data from the mothership reaches us, change our course and pursue the "Nahel Argama"."

There was nothing more to be said, except that this would be a long mission for them. (Understood) Daryl and Watts answered in unison, showing their gloom and realization ever since they got involved with the "Unicorn"; Nigel wordlessly operated the control stick.

The question was neither about whether the "Unicorn" pilot was a Newtype, or whether Newtypes exists. What annoyed him was the great fear humans had, to a point where they created a machine like the "Banshee", and even allowed for the existence of Cyber-Newtypes. *We don't need the power of that thing. We can beat the "Unicorn" with our strength with our own abilities.* With this determination, Nigel looked towards the shoal space region. In the midst of the stars twinkling, he still could not find the light of the " Nahel Argama".

Part 28

(The Anaheim electrowave scope has confirmed it. From the trajectory, there's a very large chance that the "Nahel Argama" is headed to "Industrial 7". If it is due to the actions of the Laplace Process, we can assume that place to be the final destination.)

Alberto's voice rang in the helmet, and there was no room to argue back."Industrial 7" was the place where everything began; it would be too coincidental to be a mere intermediate point. " Doesn't that place belong to Anaheim?" Riddhe looked at the system test window on the all-view monitor as he grumbled. (That is the case for the colony itself.) Alberto, who should be in the second communication room, answered back.

(However, the colony builder "Magellanica" is different. The Vist residence was moved there from Earth; Cardeas himself directed the move, and the Foundation has no interference with Anaheim. The secret organisation working under the leader directly may have done something.)

"They buried their treasure under their house?"

(That's not impossible. Don't forget that we're born in families with their fair share of troubles.)

His mind was not in the mood to give a bitter smile in the face of such a sarcastic remark. *Whatever, as long as I can beat the " Unicorn" and prevent the "Box" from being opened--anything goes as long as I prove that my choice isn't wrong.*(Hatch opened. Romeo 008, please head to the catapult deck.) Riddhe heard the voice of the communication officer as he suppressed his agitated heart and stepped on the pedal cautiously. The "Banshee" moved its sole forward, and as the "General Revil" launching deck was surrounded by vacuum, and there was a deep tremor.

(The Neo Zeon ship from Side 6 is headed to the shoal region too. At the rate they're headed, they'll reach the "Nahel Argama" faster than you do. However, don't worry about any other enemies and just get rid of it before it reaches "Industrial 7". We'll catch up soon.)

The control light above the hatch showed a green light. Riddhe let the "Banshee" move forward as its feet were connected to the catapult. There were no other allied machine, and the "Banshee" was the only one headed to the target as it would get on the Base Jabber outside the deck. Of course, once the "General Revil" arrive, 4 mobile suit platoons would sortie, but Riddhe did not hope to wait until that moment. *I must be the one to end it all. The "Banshee" has enough capabilities for this.*

"Even if I'm not a Cyber-Newtype, I'll have complete control over it."

I'll control it as a normal human frustrated over this world that has not changed. (Course clear, Romeo 008, please proceed for launch.) The operator's voice rang as he thought, and he gathered strength in his pubes.

"Romeo 008, "Banshee", launching!"

The catapult was activated, and the launch G force struck him. Riddhe felt his normal vision narrow as he widened his eyes and looked forward. The black machine had the Beam Magnum in its right hand, the shield in its left hand, and the Hyper Bazooka on its backpack as it was shot out from its catapult deck. The golden

horn reflected the sunlight as the "Banshee" left the "General Revil" .

There were many numerous stars in the endless space where he was headed, where Banagher, Mineva, and the place where everything began, where the space battlefield was. The "Banshee" ferried the realization and guts of the person as it glided through the dark vacuum.